

THESE WERE THY MERCHANTS

Bridges has been widely acclaimed as one of Australia's leading writers and his succession of magnificent novels have won the most sincere tributes. It is some years since his last novel was issued, and thus a large public will be awaiting his new novel with impatience.

It tells of the conflict between the business ruthlessness of Henry Cleeve and the idealism of his young nephew David. It reveals the moving and poignant story of the banishment of David's lovely mother for the sins she never committed, and a surprising and dramatic climax.

Set in Tasmania, in the stirring days of William IV, *These Were Thy Merchants* bids fair to be one of Roy Bridges' most popular and appealing romances.

By the same Author

AND ALL THAT BEAUTY

NEGROHEAD

CLOUD

TRINITY

SOUL FROM THE SWORD

ROY BRIDGES

These Were Thy Merchants

These Were Thy Merchants

To the men and women
of the State of Tennessee
I am, Sir, very respectfully,
Yours, Sir, very respectfully,
J. M. Smith.

181a,
High Street,
Stoke Newington,
N. 16.

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To

MRS. M. B. PATON

Australian, Writer, Friend . . .

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THESE WERE THY MERCHANTS

CHAPTER I

LETTER OF A DEAD LADY

THE sole privilege granted to David Cleeve among the clerks of Cleeve & Cleeve was freedom from the Stores at half-past five o'clock. His fellow-clerks might or might not be free at six o'clock. It depended on the arrival at, or the departure from, Hobart Town of ships with goods consigned to, or by, the House. The staff might be held at its desks to midnight.

The privilege to David was not a concession to him as nephew of Mr. Henry Cleeve, but to Miss Serena Cleeve, his Aunt—and to her insistence that David should be at the dinner-table by half-past six. His duties in the counting-house of Cleeve & Cleeve must not conflict with her rigid rule of punctuality. She would not have David coming late to table, untidy, or ink-stained. He must be free during the evening to escort her to concert or lecture at the Mechanics' Institution, or in visits to Mrs. Learoyd, her sister, or others in the circle of her kin and kind. Even if he were a clerk

at the Stores, he would be junior partner on his coming of age, and in the fullness of time he would succeed Henry himself as Head of the House!

This succession was inevitable as an act of God, but the mere thought that Henry should be gathered to his fathers—that there should be a House of Cleeve—a Hobart Town—a Colony—a Universe—without Henry suggested sacrilege, to Miss Serena.

In the meantime David must be home to dinner at half-past six.

David, at a quarter-past six on a November evening, stood adjusting his cravat before the tall dressing-glass in his bedroom. Reality and reflection of David showed him boyish for his twenty years, slight of body, of middle stature, and of an indefinite air of awkwardness, in spite of his well-tailored dark blue suit, his fine linen, black silken cravat, and black polished shoes; as fair of hair, checked by Macassar oil in a tendency to curl; as brown of eyes, and small and fine of features. For good looks, he lacked animation, brightness of eyes, smile of lips, and the natural expression of young manhood—confidence and happiness. Scowl of brows, gloom of eyes, and an air of sullenness suggested at least that he dared to be frank with himself, as reflected in the dressing-glass.

Reality and reflection conveyed the diffidence and the discontent which were not boyish, and seemed not natural to him.

The golden light of early evening trespassed on the room, on the oaken bed with its white linen and Marcella quilt, the high wardrobe, the stiff chairs, the table by the bed, with a candlestick free from spilt wax, the screened hearth, and the Scriptural engravings, oak-framed, against the grey-papered walls.

A prim clock ticked diffidently on the chimney-shelf. The tapestry square on the coldly polished floor showed a faded design of shepherdesses and sheep, diffident, and without semblance of animation or life. The lacquered screen before the hearth, with its fantastic figures of pearl-shell, in illustration or suggestion of the China trading of Cleeve & Cleeve, alone conflicted with the austere and unimaginative room. The brushes before the dressing-glass were backed with ivory. The Bible and the Prayer-Book on the bedside-table were bound in black morocco, tooled with gold.

No other book, no colour print, no miniature, no richness of chintz or brocade, relieved the dullness of the room—austerity attained no dignity. The curtains were like clouds—grey-blue; their purpose was confined to shutting out the brightness of the sun, and not by colour or by harmony to adorn the room. But how should colour have relieved, or harmonized with, a room which, with its formal oak, suggested an undertaker's shop, well stocked with

coffins for the burial of imagination or ideas?

The youth of David Cleeve befitted the room, despite his air of diffidence or sullenness and discontent, no better than the odd, stray fancy of colour and design on the China screen.

David, with his cravat adjusted, turned from the mirror. He glanced at the clock, and he drew from the breast-pocket of his office coat the bewildering letter. The letter that had been handed to him by the office-boy, as he left the Stores at noon to lunch at the Ship Inn. A lad had brought it, the boy had said, telling him only that a lady had given him a shilling to take it to the Cleeve Stores. David had questioned the office-boy only on his return from the inn, with care to pretend indifference, though eager to know whether the writer of the letter had taken it to the Stores for him . . . whether she had been so near. . . .

For the letter told him that the writer was his Mother, whom he had thought dead.

Now, he held the letter to the yellow light striking across the window. He read it again, though, in truth, the words were stamped on his mind, for he had scanned many times the clear writing, wavering towards its close, as though her hand had trembled:

My dear David,

Your Mother writes this letter to you. Yes, I know they have told you—they would tell you, I am sure, remembering

your Uncle Henry and your Aunt Serena—that I died when you were a little boy.

But, dear, that isn't true. I couldn't be writing to you if it were true, could I? I might be loving you, and watching over you, if I were dead, but I couldn't be in Hobart Town if I were in Heaven, could I? For they are not the same place.

Dear, I shouldn't try to joke, writing so to you. But I'm trying only not to cry, by laughing, or pretending to laugh, as I write to you, asking you to come and see me at this house, in which I am staying—and to come soon, please, oh, very soon! For I haven't seen you for eighteen years. I've written letters—many letters—and asked them—your Uncle Henry and Aunt Serena—to give to you messages from me, and to let me write a letter to you, so that you might not grow up believing only evil of me—whether you knew me living, or whether you thought me dead. But they have not replied to me—ever! So I've known that they must have told you I was dead.

David, in all your life—and you must be a man now, your Mother has asked only this of you—to come to see her, now that she has returned from England, just through thinking of you, and through hoping that she may see you, and through praying that she may speak to you, and

persuade you to think more kindly of her than you have been taught—must have been taught—to think of her. David, really I am—really it is your Mother!

You may find this house easily, if you do come to see me. It's the white house on the hill from Warwick Street, you know—Miss Welland's house; she is my friend. You do not know her; they would not have you know your Mother's friend.

David, come to me!

Your MOTHER.

He folded the letter and put it in his coat-pocket. He stared out on the deepening gold of sunlight. The courtyard below him seemed a pit of violet shadow. He heard clatter and tinkle and murmur of voices from the kitchen below him, and the tall clock in the hall striking the half-hour.

Instantly the bell for dinner rang decorously through the house. He heeded dully and responded. He went downstairs from his room, with his mind bewildered and incredulous still, not having resolved his doubt, whether he should go to the Welland house that night, defying—daring to defy—Uncle Henry Cleeve?

Secretly to the house, or boldly questioning Uncle Henry and Aunt Serena—was it true?—was his Mother alive?—could this be she?

And why . . . why . . . had they told him—always—that she was dead?

CHAPTER II

CLEEVE—AND CLEEVE

THE day had been flooded with yellow sunlight suggesting the ripening of fruit and corn. The evening was warm still, and in spite of shutters and blinds and curtains of rich yet sombre brocade, sunlight and warmth had intruded on the house. But, lest the breeze might rise from the sea, and the evening be cold, a fire was burning in the parlour; the windows were closed against the air, and the curtains drawn across the lovely colours of the sunset.

Uncle Henry had not come downstairs when David reached the parlour. Miss Serena was seated in her stiff-backed, rosewood chair by the hearth. She turned her head as the boy entered the room, and she offered her cheek for his kiss.

Her greeting, "Well, my dear?" was kindly; her pale eyes through her gold-mounted spectacles appraised and approved his tidiness, as though he were a child.

Serena Cleeve, in her fifty-fifth year, was of the definite type of indefinite spinster. Her complexion was colourless. Her hair, showing narrowly beyond her cornet cap, might have

been black streaked with grey—as her gown itself of a deep grey or of a fading black. Even the little plait of hair in her memorial brooch was faded, or had been greying at the time of the death of its original owner. Miss Serena wore no jewels on her fingers, showing from grey—or faded black—mittens. A thin chain of pale gold—or was it tarnished silver?—about her neck secured her watch, which she held now in her hand.

“Your Uncle Henry,” she said to David, “should be here; it is past the half-hour.”

The theorist, from the influence of Miss Serena on the parlour—as her own domain—might have interpreted her motive as an avoidance of colour, as of sunlight or fresh air—or “dangerous draughts,” as Miss Serena would have contended. The stability of the House of Cleeve, its traditions and its pride, might show in the dignity of portraits, of cedar and rosewood, in branching candlesticks, in weight of furniture, in Turkey carpet, in richness of brocades, chimney glass and gilded mirrors, marble-cased clock, and alabaster vases; but Miss Serena’s taste or personality was revealed in the dullness of the dyes of carpet and curtains, the absence of chintz, or delicacy of cabinet of china, or of flowers in decoration. Else, closeness and overheating apart, the room combined comfort with dignity—a heavy, cloying comfort, and an exceedingly dull dignity.

David, moving to the couch remote from the fireside and sitting down, replied, with truth, to his Aunt's question—"Aren't you very hungry, David, after waiting so long for your dinner?"——

"Not at all, thank you, Aunt!"—with a slight nausea at the thought of the richness of soups, gravies and sauces, and the heaviness of old wine.

"Not hungry, my dear! Aren't you well?"

"Quite well, thank you, Aunt."

"H'm! You don't look so. You're peaked and pale. What's the matter with you, David?"—Miss Serena's gaze at him was searching and suspicious.

"The matter, Aunt?"

"You heard me, David. You're sick, or worried. I know!"

"No, Aunt, pardon me."

"Don't tell me, sir! I know better. What is it, David? Is your Uncle Henry not pleased with you at the Stores?"

"He hasn't told me so to-day," David said wearily. "Truly, there is nothing the matter, Aunt."

"But there is!"

"Well, perhaps the room is a little too hot and close for me."

"Nonsense! The room is nothing of the kind. Is it, Henry?"—as her brother entered the parlour.

"I beg your pardon, Serena. Is what—?"

He raised his eyebrows and smiled at her. "I did not hear you."

"David says the room is too hot and close, when it is nothing of the kind."

"Then the room is not too hot or close, and is nothing of the kind!" Henry said, laughing, and halted by the hearth. "And David is in error, I'm sure. Well, David?"—with a quizzical glance at his nephew.

David had risen on Mr. Cleeve's coming into the room, and was eyeing him now, and trying to compel his eyes to challenge the keen blue eyes in vivid contrast, as the black brows and the red mouth, with the ivory whiteness of Henry Cleeve's face. David was thinking to ask his question at once—"Uncle Henry, is my Mother—living?"—and to compel discussion, with questions and answers concerning the motives of secrecy to him all the years. But David was quailing—always fear dominated will and thought and action, from no harshness or severity to him on the part of Mr. Cleeve during his life in his Uncle's household, but from Mr. Cleeve's personality, and his strength of will, as his strength of body.

Young David Cleeve now, in the presence of Mr. Henry Cleeve, was colourless, diffident, and indecisive.

Uncle Henry Cleeve was in his fiftieth year, and had attained a portentous dignity, which escaped pomposity through his satiric estimate

of himself—as of mankind. A handsome, silver-haired, and upright gentleman, in sober black suit, white linen and black cravat—he regulated girth and defeated stoutness by horsemanship. The high, white head, and the stately carriage of the man, told his arrogance—the broad, black brows and the keen, sea-blue eyes, the decision of the lips and chin, stamped him a master of men and affairs. Old Mr. Robert Walham, of the Walham Stores,¹ in his shrewd estimate of his rival merchant, interpreted him, chuckling: “Cleeve has a high opinion of himself—none higher, but his judgment is good, I grant you, of himself as of any man or market.”

“Thank you, yes, sir,” David faltered.

“As we parted company only half an hour ago, and at my door,” Uncle Henry said jocularly, “I’d wonder—and I’d be grieved—if you were not well, David. Shall I ring, Serena?”

“If you are ready for your dinner, Henry,” Miss Serena said.

Henry stretched out his hand and pulled the bell-rope. He turned then from the hearth and, with a glance at David, he directed: “Go in before us, my boy. I have a word to say to your Aunt before dinner.”

David, going from the room and slowly closing the door, heard Uncle Henry’s words, as he had purposed; and he trembled, hearing:

¹*And All That Beauty*

"Serena, I grieve to tell you, Mrs. Charles is back in Hobart Town!"

And Aunt Serena's shrill cry: "Back in Hobart Town! Are you dreaming, Henry? I thought—and I hoped—for David's sake that she was dead!"

CHAPTER III

FOLLY OF RETURN

THE house was high, and gracious of architecture. Its front door was painted white, and the delicacy of its fanlight was defined with green. French windows of parlour and dining-room opened on the lawn. A cypress hedge hid from the house the blemish of garden walls of rough stone, topped with the glass of bottles.

So to Isabel Cleeve and Rachel Welland, seated at the open window of the parlour, the prospect offered of order and harmony of mown lawn, clipped hedge, and the sundial among lilies in line with the window.

In the moonlight the severity of Miss Welland's taste was softened—the cypress hedge was like a low, green bank above a sheet of water, green and silver-blue. In the hesitant light of the one candle burning in the room, form was suggested, not defined. Against the moonlight washing the house-front, Isabel Cleeve was clear to Rachel Welland's coldly appreciating eyes. Isabel was more beautiful now than at the time of her marriage with Charles Cleeve; Rachel Welland's reflection was satiric—two-and-twenty years from girl-

hood to middle age; happiness and hope . . . defeat of happiness and hope, and of that indefinite plan of life, nebulous then, and no more than ignorance of the tricks of destiny—no more than the heedlessness of youth, accepting light and colour of life as natural rights, and doubting not at all that the felicities of the time were the felicities for all time. . . . The unconscious principle or practice of youth was to eat, to drink, and to be merry—for the day was as the morrow would be, and all the morrows. . . .

Rachel had been Isabel's bridesmaid. She had thought to be a bride. She reflected that the tragedy of her marriage with Henry Cleeve must have been deeper than the tragedy of Isabel's marriage with Charles, for she must have cared more than Isabel was capable of caring. She could not have endured so to lose, and so to laugh at life, as Isabel had lost, and was laughing. There must have been madness in Rachel's laughter.

She checked her reverie with impatience. Her wits were wandering—surely!—that she could have remembered how much she had loved Henry Cleeve—so many years ago!

She watched Isabel Cleeve from the shadow, with knowledge lending colour and line which were indefinite in moonlight—the red-gold of Isabel's hair, her brown eyes, the red rose of her mouth, the faint rose of the cheeks, the gracious bend of neck, and the delicate play

of her hand with her fan. The faded muslin of her dress was transformed by the witchery of moonlight to a clouding beauty, and the pale crystal drops of her ear-rings and her crystal necklace became precious gems.

At a sigh of weariness or impatience from Isabel, Rachel stirred to recollection and fulfilment of her duties as hostess and as friend:

"Isabel, dear! I feared that you would find staying with me very dull. I shouldn't have let you sit so long here in the darkness—or the moonlight. It is a habit of mine to sit here on fine evenings. Now I'll go light the other candles and ring for tea. And then we'll have music—shall we? You'll sing for me?"

"No, Rachel, please!"

"But I heard you sigh with weariness."

"Oh, no, dear. I was only impatient of waiting—that was all. You know I was not accustomed at all to waiting!"—Isabel's voice was softly resentful.

"I seem to have been waiting all my life, Isabel," Rachel drawled, "for something to happen—I mean something in compensation for the weariness of waiting." Her laughter was hard, as she rose and stood beside her friend. "It hasn't happened. . . . You mean that you are weary of waiting for your son, Isabel, don't you? You've spoken to him to-day, or sent a message to him, and asked him to come to this house? And he hasn't come, of course!"

"If I had spoken to him," Isabel said, "I should have told you, Rachel. But I did send a letter to him at the Cleeve Stores to-day."

"You didn't tell me of it," Rachel said resentfully. "Why didn't you?"

"Simply because I didn't wish to confess my weariness of waiting," Isabel said with tremulous laughter, "as I confess it now."

Rachel looked sharply at her. "Even if your letter reached him," she sneered, "he wouldn't come to see you, Isabel."

"You mean they would prevent his doing so? . . . Yes, of course, I understand that, Rachel. And yet I hoped—and yet. . . . It isn't late now!"

"No, it isn't late," Rachel conceded. "But you're foolish to hope. You should know Henry Cleeve better—now!"

"I should know Henry Cleeve—yes," Isabel said slowly. "But, Rachel dear, I do not know my son."

"You should. His mind is Henry Cleeve's mind."

"But, Rachel, haven't you told me that you do not know the boy?"

"I know Henry Cleeve!" Rachel's tone was hard. "Do I need to know the boy?" She drew back, as though to go toward the burning candle, but she paused and looked again at her friend, and said with sardonic laughter: "You show a strange want of tact, Isabel."

"How—want of tact?"

"In rising from the dead, my dear!"

"Is this amusing, Rachel?"

"Neither to you nor to me, Isabel."

"Then I don't understand you, I'm afraid."

"Oh, but you do, Isabel! You think, now that you have been so foolish as to return to Hobart Town, to take up life as the widow of a Cleeve, at the very point at which you laid down your life as wife of a Cleeve. You pretend—or you feel—yes, I'm sure you feel—you persuade yourself at least that you feel, just such a fondness or affection for your son as you might have felt, but didn't feel, when he was an infant. I mean when you left the Cleeve house, because you couldn't endure Charles or Serena—or, more important—Henry!"

"You are strangely charitable for Hobart Town, Rachel," Isabel said with faint laughter.

"I am not conscious of charity."

"Aren't you? I mean in thinking or saying that I ran away from Hobart Town, only because of disagreement with the Cleeves—incompatibility of temper in the case of poor Charles—inability to reconcile myself with the Cleeve idea."

"You mean the greatness of Henry?"

"Yes, of course. The greatness of Henry! But that wasn't all, Rachel; that wasn't all!" Her tremulous words were scarcely audible.

Rachel, now not looking at her, said slowly: "Why are you telling me of this, Isabel?"

"I suppose, in justice to myself. And because of your sneer at me."

"I did not sneer at you, Isabel."

"Did you not?" Isabel's voice rose with mockery. "Oh, did you not, my dear?"

"How?"

"Taunting me with inconsistency, Rachel. Saying that I did not love David then—suggesting that I didn't care so much, that I would stay with him—endure even the Cleeves, for his sake and because of my love of him. And that I come back now in quest of him, not knowing my own mind—my own heart; daring to want the boy to care for me, now that I'm growing old and tired, and I'm losing my looks—though I couldn't care then. That was what you meant, Rachel. But it isn't just. It isn't true."

"Isabel," Rachel Welland said with a gentleness strange to her, "I would not have you tell me—why—you left Hobart Town."

"You mean it would weary you to listen—or it would pain you to hear?" Isabel's voice was satiric.

"You are not just or kind now, Isabel, in reproaching me."

"Then why don't you want to hear me and my reason for leaving Hobart Town, and Charles, and the boy?"

"Why do you wish to tell me?"

"I've said—in justice to myself! . . . No, that isn't the reason, Rachel. It's only to tell you—only to confide in you—so that you'll

understand—that I had no choice. I had no choice! . . . I did not leave Hobart Town—I did not desert my little son—of my free will!”

Rachel was silent, standing motionless, and again looking darkly down upon her friend, and watching the play of pride and passionate resentment on the lovely face, and the glitter of crystals trembling as she was shaken with emotion; the flutter of the white fan and the gleam of tears.

“Rachel . . . they said . . . they let it be known or understood . . . that I fled from Hobart Town—didn’t they?—with Faraday, and that the blow—my shame and my desertion—killed Charles? . . . Didn’t they say that?”

“It was the gossip of Hobart Town—yes, the scandal of the time—yes.”

“They told you this?”

“Isabel, I have not spoken with Henry or Serena Cleeve for all those years.”

“Since you broke off your engagement with Henry?”

“Yes, since I broke off my engagement with Henry!” Her voice was leaden and expressionless.

“Why did you do so, Rachel?”

“You should guess, Isabel,” Rachel said, with harsh and jangling laughter, and turned, and with the burning candle lit the candles on the chimney-shelf and the table. She set down the candlestick and she stretched out her hand

to the bell-rope, and she would have rung for the maidservant, but, heeding Isabel's silence, she turned again and looked sharply at her.

The white light of the candles showed to her palely the beautiful face and its terror and its pain. Scarcely she heard the voice:

"Rachel, you don't think . . . you can't mean . . . I was the cause?"

She cried out harshly: "Did I say so, Isabel—did I suggest——?"

"Yes . . . saying that I should know—why you didn't marry Henry! . . . What did you mean, Rachel . . . Rachel?"

Rachel Welland turned from her and rang the bell. "I simply meant that you, being married to Charles, and knowing Henry—knowing the Cleeves, must surely understand why I didn't marry Henry."

"Only this?"

"Only this, Isabel."

CHAPTER IV

MR. CLEEVE AND HONOUR

AS the mind and the taste of Miss Serena controlled the appointments and decoration of the parlour, the mind and the taste of Mr. Cleeve dominated the study.

The room was of a rich dignity of mahogany, glass, leather, and literature; panelling, colour-prints, and engravings. The portrait of David's father looked from its heavy, gilded frame above the hearth—the fineness of Bock's portraiture interpreted duly the cold and colourless personality; the chill influence of the painting on the room was counteracted reasonably by the wide hearth, the broad casements, for the sunlight and the fresh air, and the wine colours of brocades and rugs. The taste of Mr. Cleeve preferred fine brass and beaten copper to silver for many candlesticks and a hanging lamp. The room glowed with light, and was sweet with the clean air of the November night. No fire burned. The screen of cedar and leather, opulently painted, depicted an Indiaman in full sail on waters dyed with the scarlet and gold of sunset.

Mr. Cleeve stood before the hearth with his feet far apart, and his coat-tail raised as though

the fire were kindled and the evening was cold. David, seated by the table, with his chin on his right hand, faced Mr. Cleeve—so far as ever David might be said to face Mr. Cleeve. The lights from candles and lamp were reflected from polished furniture, from the glass fronts of book-cases, and from the gilt lettering and tooling of the array of books—from Shakespeare and his fellow Elizabethans to “Waverley,” and a nice or naughty selection of minor romances from Walpole to Monk Lewis.

And dully heeding Uncle Henry, at first, David had the solace to his resentment at his exposition of the case of Cleeve and Cleeve, that Uncle Henry had solved for him the difficulty of approach to the problem raised by his Mother’s letter:

“David, my task is a difficult one.” Mr. Cleeve’s tone and expression were grave and regretful. “But your Aunt and I agreed—before dinner—that my proper course was to take you at once into my confidence. You are on the verge of manhood, David. I fear that the truth should not be withheld longer from you.”

He paused. David, stealing a glance at him, ventured: “Yes, sir.”

“The truth, my dear boy, that your Mother is not dead, as I judged wise—for your own happiness, David, as a child, that you should believe. Do you grasp my meaning, David?”

"My Mother is alive—yes, Uncle Henry," David faltered. "But not why you—why everybody should have told me that she was dead!"

Henry's glance and tone showed displeasure. "You heard what I said, David. I judged it wise that you should not know that your Mother was alive. I was studying only your happiness."

"Yes, sir, but why?"

He believed that Uncle Henry's eyes flickered, and that he hesitated in his reply: "I prefer that you accept my assurance of the wisdom of this secrecy, David, without questioning me too closely concerning my motive."

David was silent, through no confidence in the wisdom or the justice of Uncle Henry's motive, but through fear—less of Uncle Henry than of the nature of his disclosure. How should he bear to hear him—any man—speak cruelly and slighitingly of his Mother—the writer of that strange, gay, sad little letter—with its message and appeal increasing in its significance to him and its influence on him?

"Naturally, David, this must come as a shock to you," Mr. Cleeve said with a grave sympathy.

"How—a shock, sir?" David's voice trembled. "My Mother alive, though I've always been told she died in Sydney—not here—when I asked—when I wanted to know where she was buried, so that I might go and

see her grave. Why should it be a shock to me? Why shouldn't I be happy—very happy—to think—to know that she is alive."

Henry Cleeve did not reply. His knitted brows and downcast eyes were nicely adapted to suggesting sombre and sorrowful reflections.

David took courage from his silence. He repeated: "Why shouldn't I be happy that my Mother is alive? My Mother!"

"David," Henry said earnestly, "I beg you not to press the question!"

"But I must know, sir!"

"Will you not trust me, David?"

"I must know!"

"Wait, please!" Mr. Cleeve's eyes were now intent and searching in their gaze. "Ask yourself this question, David—would we have told you, all these years, that your mother was dead, unless—unless—?" Again he hesitated; then, with a sudden passionate gesture and harshness of voice, he cried out: "Unless she must be dead to you!"

David Cleeve did not speak; his gaze was fearless and direct; not the boy's, but the man's eyes flickered—the boy's will challenged and repelled the man's will.

Drawing back, averting his face, standing with bowed head and chin resting on his left arm against the chimney-piece, Mr. Cleeve was silent for the moment; he said then in an undertone—and there was a note in his voice that carried conviction to young David, of

genuine emotion, shame and abhorrence of a duty as he conceived it: "David, I have tried—so far as in me lies—to bring you up with the standard—the code of honour—of a gentleman. Ask yourself, how should I reply to your questions . . . questions concerning a woman, and that woman your Mother . . . my brother's widow, and once—long ago—loved and honoured by us, but now? . . . Do you wish me to say more than this, David?"

White and trembling, David said hoarsely: "But . . . not telling me . . . the truth; hinting, you're making me all the more afraid! You're reflecting on her . . . my Mother! Not speaking frankly and letting me judge!"

"No man may judge his Mother, David!"

"No. Letting me judge . . . letting me judge. . . ."

"Yes, David?"

"Letting me judge you, Uncle Henry, and Aunt Serena, and . . . and—" He motioned to the portrait of his father.

Henry Cleeve said deliberately: "I shall not reply to your questions, David."

"Then let me see her!"

"See her!" Mr. Cleeve turned instantly from the hearth. "You know that she is in Hobart Town, do you?"

David faltered: "Yes, I know!"

"I did not tell you this, David."

"No—you didn't tell me."

"She has approached you—she has written to you already, has she?"

"Yes."

"When?"

"To-day."

"I do not ask you the content of this letter, David. But I resent your silence—your lack of confidence in me." Mr. Cleeve's tone was authoritative and threatening. He seemed, by the grim, satiric twist on his lips, to heed the irony that he should blame the boy for his lack of confidence, in a tone which would repel confidence. He said simply, and in a lower, kindlier tone: "You might have told me, David, with perfect confidence. She has written to you, then, and she has asked to see you—you have told me this, by your request to me that I should grant you leave to see her. I do not grant this leave!"

David had risen. His right hand clasped the table edge, as though to steady his will and to stay his trembling. He said: "I ask you to reconsider, sir!"

Cleeve's darkling look at him suggested wonder at the challenge in the boy's will to his. He said, with gravity of tone and expression: "Just as I feared—her presence here is causing strife and doubts among us, as always, David. You will not see her!"

"But I must see her, sir!"

"You will not see her by my leave!"

"Why not, sir?"

"I remind you, David, of my reply to that question—and my reason for reticence."

David repeated stolidly: "Why not?"

"You heard me, David!"

David was pale. His grip on the table loosened. His knuckles beat on the polished wood, only to the emphasis of his own fears, and yet his gaze was direct, as not before this night, in facing Henry Cleeve; and though his voice shook, his resolution was definite in his words: "I am sorry that I can't obey your orders, Uncle Henry."

Cleeve's struggle with his instant passion was told in face suffused, in veins at temples distended, in blaze of eyes, in furious raising of his hands as though to strike—yet in the grim assertion of the hard line of his lips, in silencing oath and denunciation. On the instant, his arrogant head was high; his hand sank and was rigid at his side. His words were slow and measured: "I warn you, David, not to disobey me. For your own sake, I appeal to you to trust me."

David said slowly: "My Mother, sir, has written to me and asked me to see her. I shall see her. If you would have me decline to see her, tell me why?"

"No, David!" Mr. Cleeve wore an air of restraint and regret, replying: "No! I wonder at, and I deplore, your asking such a question."

"But surely, sir, I have a right to know!"

"No right!"

"I say I have a right to know!"

"And I repeat—no right!" Henry Cleeve cried out. "No right as gentleman . . . or as her son, David!"

He waved his hand in sign of dismissal. He walked to his desk and sat down. His fingers were deftly sorting out the correspondence before him as David went slowly from the study.

CHAPTER V

MYSTERIOUS, BAFFLING, DELIGHTFUL?

THE Cleeve house stood far up Macquarie Street, on the southern side. The dignity of its pillared front, the flight of stone steps leading down from its porch to the street, its carriage-way, and its stone outbuildings—the stables and the less-important quarters for the servants—expressed the solid worth of Henry Cleeve, as head of the House of Cleeve—or its Colonial branch.

The departure of the Cleeves from England for New South Wales had resembled the departure of Israel and his race for Egypt. Henry's father—the late Mr. Robert Cleeve—had journeyed, attended by his sons and daughters, son's wife, and minor kin. Preference of Hobart Town over Sydney as the new field for the Cleeve fortunes dated as late as Colonel Sorell's early Governorship in Van Diemen's Land.

David paused in the hall in momentary indecision—should he persist in defiance of Uncle Henry, and go at once to the house on the hill above Warwick Street, or return to the study and apologize?

On looking at the clock in the hall and seeing

that the hands pointed to nine o'clock, almost he determined that it was too late to go in quest that night. The Cleeve rule was that he must be in bed by ten o'clock, on any night on which he was free from escorting Aunt Serena to concert, lecture, or on social call, so that he might be early and clear-headed for his duties at the Stores on the following morning.

Spirit of revolt was stronger than the discipline of habit. He took his hat, and was going noiselessly and hurriedly along the hall, when the parlour door opened and Aunt Serena confronted him.

Her exclamation was sharp and shrill: "Good gracious, David! You're not going out!"

"Yes, Aunt."

"So late as this!"

"It's only nine o'clock!"

"Don't speak to me in such a tone, sir! Does your Uncle Henry approve?"

David said doggedly: "No! But I'm going!"

"Henry! Henry!" Aunt Serena called shrilly along the hall. "Henry!"

But if Mr. Cleeve heard or heeded the summons, he did not appear before David had passed Miss Serena unceremoniously and had gone out. David pulled the door with a crash, raced down the steps, and turned down Macquarie Street for Elizabeth Street.

Moonlight gave beauty and serenity to the little town—now developing from the squalor of the early settlement into dignity, through buildings of stone and brick fashioned to fine architecture. Light of the few lamps, and illumination from porches and windows of the stately dwellings of officialdom, were merged in the moonlight. Down the hill, across Murray Street, and past St. David's Church, and Government House on the other side of the way, with high lamps burning at its portals, but scant light showing from its windows; about the Guardhouse, and into Elizabeth Street, the road was clear to David and without dangerous shadows. Military and police, patrolling Hobart Town under Governor Arthur's vigorous rule, did not ensure safety for the wayfarer of the night.

The white light ran like a river northward to the hill, scrub-grown and pierced with quarries and clay pits. Warwick Street was developing across this hill from west to east, between Elizabeth and Campbell Streets. The way rose steeply through shadows. The cottages of labourers and small tradesmen were few. The street was lonely and rough, with patches of gloom from piled stone and saplings against the moonlight. David, going swiftly, was challenged by no one.

The iron gate of Rachel Welland's house was before him—it was locked for security in this loneliness on the hill. He rang the bell, and

the clangor sounded harsh against the gentle night.

He heard presently the murmur of women's voices, and a little trill of nervous laughter, and the tapping of shoes on the flagged path, and the question: "Who is there?"

He replied: "My name's Cleeve—David Cleeve. I want, please, to see Mrs. Cleeve—this is Miss Welland's house—of course?"

"Yes, I am Miss Welland. Mrs. Cleeve is with me."

The key turned; the gate opened. He faced in moonlight a tall, grey woman in a dark gown, and a tall, fair woman—in a pale dress, with her fan fluttering, from her trembling, or from the little breeze warm on the hill; the crystals at her ears and throat gleamed like water in moonlight.

He expected, and he feared, emotional display, tears and embrace. His wonder to hear Isabel Cleeve's laughing greeting: "David! How kind of you to come and see me!" passed in his own emotion at the sight of her—exquisite, girlish still, not defeating all his thoughts or imaginings of her—but in her beauty, and her instant dearness to him, fulfilling—to his thinking—all his dreams of her.

In spite of her laughter, she had not advanced, or stretched out her hand, or proffered her cheek for his kiss. He had thought, in the many mental pictures of their

meeting, formed through the day, and during his walk from the Cleeve house, to make her a stiff bow, to hold himself aloof from her, and to offer her only frigid courtesy—until he knew——

But he advanced eagerly. His hands clasped her hands; he kissed her lips; and, holding her hands still, he stood staring at her in silence, and with an infinite delight. He was recalled, from his absorption in a dream that was the fulfilment of all his dreams of her, by her soft laughter, and by her tremulous words: "David, don't hold my hands so tightly, please! . . . Yes, I know, it is delightful that you should hold my hands and look at me as though you were glad to see me; but—Miss Welland, David!"

Rachel had locked the gate and taken out the key. David turned awkwardly and made his bow to her; she nodded to him, and she said hastily: "I shall not stay now, Isabel, of course! You may talk together in the parlour—I shall not interrupt you!"—and she went swiftly to the house.

David faced his Mother—his eyes intent on her, and wondering. She was pale now, not smiling, but trembling; he saw the gleam of tears on her lashes. She seemed to contend with, and to control, emotion.

She said softly: "Will you come with me to the parlour, David? You can stay a little while and talk with me, can you?"

"Yes, I can stay. I want to talk with you—yes!"

He offered his arm and she stretched out her hand, but she seemed to check herself, and she shook her head and drew apart from him, as though afraid. In truth, fear of emotion uncontrollable impelled her to her rejection of his proffered arm, and to her turning from him and going slowly a little ahead of him toward the house. He walked after her to the light, and at the window of the parlour, when she paused, he stood aside, till she had entered the room, murmuring: "Come in, David. Give me your hat."

He followed her in silence, taking scant heed of the grace and delicacy of the room, or the summer perfume of its rose jars. She sat down by the table, with her face in shadow from the candlelight. She pointed to the chair, so that he might face her, saying: "Sit here, please, David."

He sat down. He watched her closely. His sentiment towards her still was of delight in her beauty and her grace. He took no count of the poverty shown in the cheap and faded muslin dress, or in the crystal beads; gown and crystals seemed to him, unconsciously, in harmony with her and her dearness to him.

She had excluded Henry and Serena Cleeve from his mind, so that when she asked slowly: "Did you come to see me with their approval,

David?" he started and, staring at her, he asked: "Whose approval?"

With faint laughter, she told him: "Why, of course, your Aunt's and Uncle's approval, David—the Learoyds don't matter!"

He shook his head: "I did not come with their approval."

She said, leaning forward and gazing at him sorrowfully: "They have been good to you, haven't they, David?"

"Yes, they have been good to me, except that——!" He hesitated.

She repeated: "Except that——?" But as he did not speak, she said: "They have been good to you, then, and you do not wish to hurt them, or to quarrel with them. And your coming to see me means that you have hurt them, and quarrelled with them. I suppose you've told them? I wouldn't have you hurt or quarrel with them, dear. I mean, I don't want my coming back to injure you."

"How can it injure me?"

She was unable to exclude the notes of jealousy and distress from her tone: "David, I think that they must be very fond of you. And I know—for I've learnt, oh, so much about you—in the little while I've been in Hobart Town——"

He interrupted: "How long have you been in Hobart Town?"

"Only two days," she said. "I landed from the *Ceylon* on Monday. But I know already

that you are to succeed Mr. Cleeve at the Stores some day, and you're his heir, for he'll not marry."

"He's not so very old yet."

"No, he's not so very old! . . . But, David, I'm trying to tell you that I know his plans for you, and that I'm sorry I'm so selfish in wanting so much to see you—even if it be only once—that I couldn't help coming back to Hobart Town, and writing to you and asking you to come to see me—even though it's made Mr. Cleeve angry and meant hurting you."

He contended still with emotion from his meeting with her, and with a tendency to dimness of eyes and hoarseness of speech. He tried to control his voice to a tone of indifference: "You haven't hurt me. How should you hurt me?"—and with a desire to impress her mind with his force of will and manhood, he boasted: "I'm not afraid of Uncle Henry!"

He was offended by her soft laughter, and by her words: "Oh, aren't you, David?"—knowing that she did not believe him.

He retorted: "No! Would I be here if I were afraid?" But with understanding of his tactlessness, he coloured deeply, and, not looking at her, he mumbled: "I shouldn't have said that, should I?"

She assured him hastily: "It doesn't matter, David. Of course, I knew that Mr. Cleeve would oppose your coming to see me, if you spoke to him of my letter; and I scarcely hoped

that you would come to me. But, dear, I don't want to talk of Mr. Cleeve, or Miss Cleeve, or the Learoyds, now that you are here. I only want to ask you about yourself, and your happiness now, and your plans to be happy and successful—all the Cleeves are—and fine—finer than any of the Cleeves yet. I only want to listen, just as any mother loves to listen, David, to her son's telling her about himself. . . . Nothing else! Though, if you wish, you may ask me any question at all about myself. I shall answer it . . . truthfully, David!"

He stammered: "Yes, I want to ask you questions . . . questions! Questions that Uncle Henry would not answer."

She watched him remotely. She murmured: "Questions about myself—about my leaving the Colony long ago? . . . And leaving you, David?"

He nodded, not looking at her, but staring at the floor. "Yes, about you leaving the Colony—and me, I suppose, if you'll let me."

She said quickly and eagerly: "Yes, I'll let you, David! I hoped that you might ask me to tell you. What have they told you about me, David?"

"Always, till to-day, they've said that you were dead."

For an instant his gaze met her gaze. He saw the glitter of light in her eyes and colour on her cheeks, but her voice was soft and con-

trolled still, as she said: "Have you asked Mr. Cleeve why, David, since my letter to you to-day?"

"Yes, I've asked him. But warning him that I'd not endure—endure——"

"Endure what, David?"

"Endure his saying—any one's saying——"

"Go on, dear."

Again he stared at the floor. He muttered: "Anything against you!"

"Why, David?"

"You're my Mother!"

She was silent. Not looking at her, he knew that she had taken up her fan; he was conscious of its white fluttering. He believed that she stifled a sob.

He said huskily: "Uncle Henry would say nothing against you. But—but—his not speaking, not telling me—if there was anything to tell, any defence for saying that you were dead, made me think—as perhaps he wanted me to think, that they had reasons for saying you were dead."

She said deliberately: "They had reasons, David."

He did not speak or raise his eyes. His right hand gripped the arm of his chair. He heard a wailing note sound through her words: "Oh, David, they had reasons for saying I was dead—to them—and to you. I don't pretend that there wasn't any cause, or that they were always cruel to me—your father cruel to me,

or Henry, or Serena cruel to me—intentionally, David. I suppose, in your father's eyes, I was silly and vain and frivolous. I couldn't share the Cleeve ideas, or live to their standards. So I wasn't worthy of their pride. Oh, I know your father thought this, David; I know!"

Still he did not look at her or speak when she paused, as though purposing that he should speak. No man might judge his mother, Uncle Henry had said; yet David knew that he judged his Mother, but with all the prejudice of love for her, even on this first meeting with her since his babyhood; and of his longing only that she might justify herself to him, without question from him. In her very tolerance in speaking of the Cleeves, and her confession that she had been alien from them in pride and purpose, his self—his knowledge of them, his repressions and resentments through his life with them—now seemed to rise in his mind in advocacy for her.

He heard her speak again—with sad, soft sweetness marred by her pain:

"David, you have to remember—I mean I want you to bear in mind—that I was only a girl when I married—only nineteen, David, just a little younger than you are. And I think I was confused, and bewildered, and resentful of their rules and standards and their discipline of me—because I couldn't be like them—couldn't wish to be like them. In my way I must have been as proud as they were, David,

and I suppose that pride and anger made me foolish. . . . That was all. . . . I wasn't as your father thought me—wicked, David! I wasn't guilty when he thought me guilty! . . . David, you said you wouldn't let anyone speak ill of me, being your Mother. You meant you wouldn't think ill of me, wouldn't judge me, being your Mother! . . .”

Her voice rose in appeal: “David, don't let yourself—don't ever let yourself think anything evil against me, as the Cleeves think evil against me! Don't judge me harshly, even to yourself!”

She rose suddenly and turned from him to the window, so that the moonlight played upon her, the drooping form, the white arms rigid, and the proud head bowed. Her words came whispering and sobbing:

“For I wasn't guilty, dear! I wasn't guilty—when your father thought me guilty! . . .”

CHAPTER VI

APPEAL OF MISS SERENA

THE study of Mr. Henry Cleeve formed his sanctuary during his occupancy, not to be invaded by any member of his household unless he rang his bell and desired his or her attendance, or unless the importance to him of any visitor justified announcement to the master of the house.

Miss Serena, though tempted by curiosity and concern at David's hurrying out after his interview with Mr. Cleeve, did not dare to interrupt her brother from his correspondence or his reading.

But Mr. Cleeve had not come from the study or rung the bell, David had not returned to the house, by ten o'clock, the hour at which Miss Cleeve went to bed on any evening without social engagement. She weighed rule against practice—rule was that she should go to bed at that hour; practice was not to approach Henry in his study; doubt was determined by her anxiety for David, in the light of the news of Mrs. Charles. Serena ventured to go to the study door and to tap, though nervously. Fear was allayed by her brother's calm invitation: "Come in, pray."

Henry was still seated at his desk. His chair was drawn back a little, his right elbow rested on the desk, disordering the neat pile of papers; white sheets were scattered, and his pen lay on the floor. Serena, unimaginative and unsympathetic with any other than her brother, understood instantly his abstraction and the cause.

Though she had dared to interrupt him, she was still so much afraid of him that, while her fingers itched to gather the papers and the pen from the floor and restore order to his desk, she did not dare to touch them unbidden. Standing by the desk and pointing, she asked: "Shall I pick up these papers for you, Henry?"

He did not seem to heed her. She said sharply: "Your papers, see, Henry! You have scattered them on the floor." And she stooped and would have picked up pen and letters, but for his impatient gesture and words: "Let the papers be, Serena! Did you disturb me only to pick up papers—papers?"

She retorted with spirit and acidity: "No, Henry! You know that I'd not dream of disturbing you without good reason! David has not come home, and it's after ten o'clock! It would have been kinder to me, Henry, not to sit here, but to tell me of your talk with David and the result—not sit here, in silence and alone, I say, and leave me to my thoughts and fears all the evening!"

"I beg your pardon, Serena!" Henry had

controlled his ill-temper. "It was inexcusable of me! Yet, Serena, I am much troubled by my talk with David, and the cause—I fear that I have been distracted from my duty—here!" pointing to the letters—"and my duty to you, Serena!"

"Have you quarrelled with David?"

"Quarrelled!" Henry's brows were uplifted. "Why, no, indeed! David has refused to obey me—clearly, by his going out to-night—in search of Mrs. Charles. He confessed that he had had a letter from her asking him to see her!"

"And he did not speak of it immediately?"

"I am not concerned with his secrecy, Serena, but with his frankness," Cleeve said. "I warned him against association with Mrs. Charles. He persisted that he must see her. I told him that he would not see her with my approval. He has gone at once to see her! . . . She is living with—with Rachel Welland."

He had upon him an air of brooding melancholy, and he did not look at Serena. His hand groped among his papers, as though seeking the pen. Serena stooped quickly, picked up the pen, and laid it on his desk. Not noticing her action, he did not thank her; his fingers ceased to grope among the papers.

He said heavily, still not looking at her: "I confess the problem is difficult for me to solve, Serena. I thought it improbable that Mrs. Charles would return to Hobart Town at any

time. I know that David's association with her must prejudice him and his own interests—and the interests of Cleeve & Cleeve!"

"You can compel Henry to obey!" Serena said, in an undertone. "Surely, Henry!"

His lips were satiric: "Till this evening I was of that opinion, Serena."

Looking darkly at him, she faltered: "You can tell David the truth."

He shook his head. She thought his gesture like a motion of despair. He muttered: "You know that impossible, Serena!"

"Why impossible?"

"I have my code of honour, Serena."

"I don't understand you, Henry."

"I think you do. I cannot contemplate—denouncing a woman—to her own son."

"Henry, if she stays here," Serena whispered, "all the scandal against her and Faraday will be dragged from its grave—all the hateful scandal! We Cleeves could not endure it when poor Charles was living; and how shall we endure it now that he is dead? Has she no sense of shame, daring to come back and show her face to Hobart Town, flaunting, before our eyes? Trying to dispossess—supplant us—in the affections of poor Charles's son!"

He had listened, with white look—his lips had twisted, and his hand, from groping again among the papers, was clenched. So were his brows contracted; such was the dark fire of his

eyes, that he had seemed on the verge of passionate outbreak—of furious order to her to be silent. Now, though his voice seemed level, and his struggle had ended with the assertion of the mastery of will, she was warned by the repression of his tone—even in the wording of appeal:

"I beg you not to speak so of our brother's widow. I beg you not to raise our hurt and sorrow and humiliation—sorrow for her as for Charles—out of the grave of years!"

She checked herself in her show of white hate and passion; she murmured: "I'm sorry, Henry. I'll not speak so of her. But David is very dear to me!"

"I know this."

"So dear that I cannot bear the thought of his being with her and being influenced against us—and against Cleeve & Cleeve. Yes, Henry, against the House itself!"

"Serena, is not the thought of yourself more to you than Cleeve & Cleeve?"

She nodded grimly at his sneer: "Much more! I should be a lonely woman, Henry, with the boy gone from the house—or alienated from me!"

"Yet, even for yourself," he said, "and for your love of David, you would not have me blacken the mother's character to her son! You would not have me tell the truth, which only I—which only you and I—know wholly!"

Serena faltered: "No. I would not have this,

Henry. I spoke only in passion. Only—only—I beg you to save David for us—by any means—by any means consistent with your honour—save David! Oh, I'm not clever or attractive—I know this, Henry. I haven't her gifts and graces. I can't appeal as she can, if she be as beautiful as she was—I can't appeal, I say, to David—to any boy—just as, when I was a girl, I couldn't appeal to any man. I had no sweethearts—ever! And so—and so—having come to look on David as if he were my son—though it's unseemly of me to speak like this—even to you, my brother—I can't endure the thought of losing David to her. I say I can't endure! . . . I mustn't stay here longer with you, Henry."

"Dear Serena," he told her, lifelessly, "I assure you that I am happy to talk with you, and that you are not interrupting—even my thoughts or reasoning!"

She had raised her handkerchief to her eyes. She murmured in a broken, trembling voice: "I mean I can't bear to talk more of this to-night, Henry. I'm going to my room. Will you sit up for David?"

"Surely, Serena."

"And talk to him of this again?"

"Why, of course!"

With starting tears, and with a note of hysteria in her appeal: "Henry—somehow—by any means—keep the boy for us! Save the boy from her!"—she hurried to the door.

He had risen, and he stepped forward to open the door for her. She passed him with her eyes covered, and her thin body shaken by sobbing. He closed the door and walked to the hearth. He had a glimpse of the reflection in the chimney-glass of his haggard look, the torment of his mouth, and his haunted eyes.

He bowed his head upon his arm against the dark marble of the shelf.

CHAPTER VII

CONFLICT

DAVID returned to the house half an hour later. His knocking at the front door was answered by Cleeve's manservant, Acres.

"Mr. Cleeve wants to see you in the study, Mr. David," Acres said with the subdued voice of the assigned servant.

David entered the study with an air of challenge. Mr. Cleeve stood by the hearth. A tray was set on the table with wine and sandwiches.

Mr. Cleeve's look and greeting showed no trace of anger. "Well, David? Home at last! Your supper is there, see! I'd not sit late, I think. Your duties at the Stores to-morrow will be heavy. The *Aurelia's* consignments, of course!"

David had expected censure, and had thought to join instant battle. Hesitant, colouring deeply, he stood awkwardly now before Mr. Cleeve, his eyes not meeting Cleeve's kindly eyes. Uncle Henry's air of tolerance was insufferable.

With scowl of brows, with clenching of hands, and with harsh directness of voice, David said: "I have been with my Mother, sir,

and I have listened long to her. I do not know—I cannot guess—for all my questions—my insistence—she would not tell me, the motive for the cruel treatment of her—unjust and cruel treatment of her by my father!”

“David,” Cleeve said sombrely, his hand uplifted toward the portrait, “pray remember you speak of your father, and he is dead!”

“Sir,” David, in hoarse and passionate tone, persisted, “if he were living I should say to him, as now I say to you, living and speaking for him dead—my Mother was dealt with shamefully by him and his!”

“Say what you will of me,” Cleeve said with tolerance still, “for if I choose—if I hear aught worthy of my reply—I shall reply—and justify myself and mine!”

His air of pride, the satiric curl of his lips, and now the hard directness of his gaze stressed—and were purposed to stress by contrast—his look and tone of tolerance. Measured against the awkward and diffident boy—though inspired now by passion on his mother’s behalf—Cleeve’s mere tolerance seemed magnanimity. David’s look at him was searching and suspicious: he knew himself afraid of Uncle Henry still, in spite of rage and the justice of his cause—as he believed. He hesitated. Mr. Cleeve’s air of tolerance grew contemptuous.

“What is it you wish to say, David? Come! What charge am I to answer?”

“To-night, when you were talking to me

here," young David muttered, "when I asked why you and Aunt Serena had told me that my Mother was dead, you said that you had reasons—I should be satisfied that you had reasons. Your having said that she was dead should show me that there were reasons why she must be dead to me—could have no part again in life for me! Did you not say this?"

"It is a summary of my meaning—yes," Cleeve said. "Though not my words to you."

"And you said that I must not judge—no man must judge his mother!"

"I said this—yes."

"Hinting, suggesting—hatefully!"

Cleeve's face was white and cold as a marble mask. He did not stir or speak. His sombre eyes watched David narrowly. David—his passion not spent, but rising like a fever in his blood, and lending colour to his cheeks and fire to his eyes, yet thickening and retarding speech—cried out: "I listened to her to-night—with no prejudice of love or affection for her. I judged her—as you would not have had me judge—justly I judged her. And listening long, and hearing her answer my questions—always my questions; and never in her replies, in anything she told me, attacking you or Aunt Serena—or my father there—only defending herself, justifying herself to me—I understood how cruelly she had suffered at your hands!"

"My hands!" Cleeve said. "My hands were not against her!"

"The hands of all you Cleeves!"

"You are a Cleeve, David, as I am a Cleeve." Henry began, in a tone of tolerance still.

"She's not a Cleeve, and I'm my Mother's son!"

Dull colour rose to Cleeve's cheeks; fire seemed to start from his eyes, like flame from coals. "You wish me to infer, David, that you range yourself definitely on her side, and against us?"

"I mean that—yes. I say I am my Mother's son!"

Again the flame seemed to burn down—the eyes of Henry Cleeve were like dark coals, and his white face again was a livid mask. His words were slow and measured, and always the note of repression told the struggle of his will for mastery of himself—in conflict for mastery of the boy whose strength, through show of diffidence and subservience to him, he had suspected—yet had not thought to fear. "David, you do not weigh your words, or estimate the consequences of such a declaration or decision—if this be your decision!"

"And it is my decision!"

"To-night," Henry conceded, "it is your decision."

"I shall not waver, having heard my Mother!"

"Will you listen to me, David, for a little while?"

"If you'd say anything against her—no!"

"I have said to you—and I shall say—nothing in censure or dispraise of Mrs. Cleeve! I do not ask—and shall not ask—having no care or heed of anything she may have said against us in justification of herself."

"Again you suggest——" David cried out. Cleeve checked him with an impatient gesture and peremptory tone: "Let me speak, I say! Show the good manners—and at least you should have learnt them in this house—to let me end what I am saying! Even at your age, David. I knew more of life—ininitely more. I fear—no matter how I learnt life—I learnt life! I commend to you a maxim which I have applied to life and its problems—they seem problems till destiny solves them—and to all the important affairs of life—they seem important on human values. Will you hear my maxim, David?"

Scowling and colouring before Cleeve's eyes, now bright and hard and satiric, David did not speak.

"My maxim is: Decide to-morrow, not to-night! I have tested its value, David. Make the maxim yours!"

David cried out. "No! You must listen to me to-night! I must know——"

"David, I am master still in this house, I fear," Cleeve sneered. "I shall not listen longer to you to-night, and I shall tell you nothing to-night—or to-morrow—or any of the morrows!"

“And I tell you——”

Mr. Cleeve was sauntering to the door, and interrupted: “My maxim, David! And your supper on the tray! Do not sit late, I beg. And ring for Acres before you go upstairs, and have him put out the lights!”

He affected to stifle a yawn, opened the door, and turned and looked at David with an air of weariness, boredom, and disdain.

“Good night, my dear boy!”

CHAPTER VIII

MORROW

AT half-past five David would leave the office with Mr. Cleeve and drive home with him. But as a junior clerk in the Cleeve Stores, David must reach the counting-house by eight o'clock. Mr. Cleeve did not arrive at his office till nine o'clock. David breakfasted alone at seven o'clock.

He feared, as he bathed and shaved and dressed, that Aunt Serena, instead of waiting to breakfast with Uncle Henry, would come downstairs before he left the house. His troubled mind could not endure her questions—she would not hold herself aloof, like Uncle Henry, from references to his Mother, or from curiosity concerning his meeting with her. She would not refrain from reproaches of his Mother—and himself!

And he would tolerate no reproaches of his Mother—no attack on her—no censure of her—no scandalous charge!

He dispelled the fear by the thought of his Mother—the pure and lovely face, the laughing show of courage when they met; and yet the sorrow of her eyes, her tears, and her voice—telling him——

What had she told him?

Only that she had been unhappy with his father and Uncle Henry and Aunt Serena—all the Cleeves! Only that his father had been cruelly unjust to her, believing ill of her when she was innocent—driving her from home and David. Refusing again to see her—to let her approach David so that, helpless, angry, and afraid—and with the advice and aid of friends returning from the Colony—she had sailed away to England—to her father and her sister in London, knowing that they would welcome her and help her.

He must see her at once—this very morning—not go to the Stores! He could not live any longer in Uncle Henry's house. He could not work any longer for him!

But the clock in the hall was striking seven. Neat and brushed and polished, David hurried downstairs to the breakfast-room. Acres was waiting for him. His plate of porridge was on the table. His bacon and eggs should be in the covered dish by the coffee-pot. His toast was in its rack.

"Good morning, Acres."

"Good morning, Mr. David."

Acres drew out a chair; David seated himself at the table and ate his porridge. The *Hobart Town Courier* was folded neatly by Mr. Cleeve's place at table. Awaiting his bacon and eggs, David stretched out his hand for the newspaper, and propped it up against the milk jug.

The front page of the *Courier* announced the new goods offered in the Cleeve Stores. David felt a nervous tremor and read the list with care and fear. It was his duty to compile the lists neatly and accurately and to hand them in at the *Courier* office. Ignorance of geography, products, exports, and the innumerable classes of goods received and sold from the Stores had meant many inaccuracies—and sarcasm from the chief clerk, Mr. Joseph Allen, a Cleeve cousin, whose aspirations to junior partnership for himself, and senior partnership for his son on Mr. Cleeve's retirement or decease, must be defeated by David, unless he proved to be incompetent or intolerable to Mr. Cleeve—and unfavourable reports by Mr. Allen to the Head of the House.

Hyson Skin and Gunpowder were tea, not tobacco. Negrohead and Brazilian were tobacco, not tea. Prince's Mixture, Violet Strasburg, and Lundyfoot's Irish were snuffs, not stationery. Sugar came from the Isle of France, not from Cork or Belfast. Mr. Allen had checked and corrected the lists savagely, till that advertisement which the *Courier* had published—to the glee of old Robert Walham, of the Walham Stores, and of minor merchants, the bewilderment of customers and clients, the secret satisfaction but outward show of intense indignation on the part of Mr. Allen, and the confusion of David. Mr. Cleeve had hid his chagrin with a show of satiric amusement.

Chutney and Chang Pickles should not have been grouped with nankeen, jaconet muslins, and rich black and coloured Gros-de-Naples, or Green Hyson with satins and Persians of colours and——!

But the “Fresh Goods,” on sale at the Stores of Cleeve & Cleeve, as listed in the *Courier* were surely correct. David neglected his bacon and eggs, and read:

“At the Stores of the undersigned the cargo of the ship *Euphemia*, from Canton, consisting of:

Hyson Skin Tea.

Twankay Tea.

Company’s Hyson.

Gunpowder.

Company’s Souchong.

Orange Pekoe.

Also

“Company’s yellow and blue nankeens.

Grass cloths, white and coloured.

Lacquer ware; Mandarin carpets.”

Surely the list was accurate.

“And ex *Aurelia*

Havannah and Manilla segars and cheeroots.

Negrohead tobacco in kegs.

English brown and Champagne Vinegar and

Wines of similar quality.”

Vinegar . . . wines!

David shuddered. Did not that mean that

the wines were no better than the vinegars—they were just as sour?

He took the *Courier*, folded it hurriedly, and returned it to its place for Uncle Henry to read.

Vinegar . . . wines . . . of similar qualities?

He would not go to the Stores. He would not face Mr. Allen and his sneering and snarling, and his threats—to be fulfilled—that he would report the inaccuracy—through gross carelessness or sheer ignorance—to Mr. Cleeve immediately on his arrival at the office. David was not to be trusted. Such blunders made the House ridiculous, and injured its trade.

No, he would not face Mr. Allen—endure the life of the House—the life in the Stores, any longer. He would go at once to Miss Welland's house, see his Mother, and tell her that he would stay with her, find work, and support her.

But he had promised his Mother that he would not quarrel with Uncle Henry—would not lose his employment and ruin his prospects—would not let her do him hurt by her return. She had said that would break her heart.

He rose from his seat at table. The hands of the clock pointed to half-past seven. Daily at half-past seven he set out for the Cleeve Stores.

CHAPTER IX

MR. CLEEVE IN OFFICE

MR. HENRY CLEEVE, at the breakfast table, was sombre and abstracted. Miss Serena, interpreting his mood, did not question him concerning his talk with David of the night before, or the measures on which he had decided in order to encounter and defeat Mrs. Charles Cleeve.

Mr. Cleeve seemed to be absorbed in his newspaper. Watching him furtively, she saw his lips tighten, and his brows scowl, as he read the list of new goods offered at the Cleeve Stores. She conjectured, rightly, a new blunder on David's part; normally, this would have formed the subject of Henry's satiric comment, and the text for his own rebuke of, and homily to, David on his return to dinner. She wondered at Henry's ability to detach his mind from the grievous problem of Mrs. Charles to a matter so trifling after all, as an error in a list of imports.

She hoped that Henry would order Acres from the room, and would confide in her before he left the breakfast table. He did not do so, but on the point of departure for the Stores, while she fussed and fluttered about him,

usurping the duties of Acres, and satisfying herself that Mr. Cleeve's broadcloth and high hat were dustless, he told her, with an air of indifference and detachment:

"You trouble your mind unnecessarily with Mrs. Charles, my dear Serena. Her stay in Hobart Town will be brief."

"David has told you so?" she asked eagerly. "You are sure of this, Henry?"

"David has not told me so," Cleeve said coolly; "but I am sure of this!"

He nodded, turned, and went down the steps into Macquarie Street. The morning was fine. The November heat was moderated by a sea breeze. Mt. Wellington seemed visionary through haze and the drift of white cloud. He had told Acres that he would walk down to the Stores on so fine a morning; he did not need the carriage.

He had affected to Serena to belittle the problem of Isabel Cleeve and David. In truth, his mind was still tormented by the thought persistent through the sleepless hours from which his brow burned, his face was haggard, and his eyes sombre. Yet, walking with slow dignity down the street, now coloured by, and stirring with, the resuming commercial, industrial and official life of the town, he veiled dark thoughts by cheerfulness of aspect, by cordiality of greeting of his friends and fellow-merchants, and by polite condescension to minor acquaintances.

His bow was stately and ceremonious to the Chief Justice, leaving his house early for the Supreme Court. His bow was stiff to the Solicitor-General, whom he disliked. He would have halted to engage in conversation with Mr. Gellibrand, stepping down from his carriage before the Court-house, for he esteemed the lawyer and patriot, and he watched the Port Phillip Association with an acute interest, in view of the possibilities of trade with the new Settlement on the Yarra Yarra. He was forestalled by Mr. Hesse—tall, lean, and stooping. The two lawyers, with ceremonious raising of hats to Cleeve's salutations, walked slowly to the Court-house, and halted at the door, he saw, in close conversation.

He walked on past Government House and its sentries. He greeted, and was greeted by, many Colonists. Past the King's Commissariat Store, going down to its wharf. Past the Commissariat Office, and the Treasury, and into Hunter Street. Making his way to the great stone buildings of the Cleeve Stores—standing back from their wharf, and overlooking the harbour.

He took off his hat to let the sweet keenness of the sea breeze touch his brows. He paused to look, with a pleasure which was constant to him, over the blue water, silvered now with white sunlight, and out to the *Aurelia*, lying at anchor, and discharging cargo consigned to

the Cleeve Stores. Boats were plying between the merchantman and the wharf. Order directed the seeming chaos and disorder of traffic from the wharf, piling with merchandise for the great Stores.

He turned and threaded his way through the traffic of wagons and horses, teamsters, watermen, labourers and clerks; avoiding ropes and tackle, and bales swinging to the upper floors. He entered the counting-house, and with a nod and "Good morning!" to which the clerks chorused: "Good morning, sir!" he approached his room. The office-boy held open the baize-covered, brass-nailed door for him. He said curtly: "Presently, Mr. Allen!" to his chief clerk, waiting obsequiously. He noted with grim amusement the sheets of the *Hobart Town Courier* prominent among Allen's papers.

With his quick, sweeping survey of the counting-house, he saw David seated at his desk. The lad did not raise his head as Mr. Cleeve passed through the room.

Mr. Cleeve's taste for opulence and colour in his study, or his rooms at his home, was not reflected in his office. His rivalry with old Mr. Robert Walham, of the Walham Stores, had influenced him in the austerity of decoration, and in the dustless order of the room and its appointments. The windows were screened and curtained from the street; but at will he might look over the wharf and the harbour,

with its activities, and its natural beauty of that enduring delight to him. Over the freestone chimney-piece a portrait of his father offered the sole decoration—if it were a decoration—of the lime-washed walls. The screen before the hearth was of fine but sombre lacquer. His desk was of cedar. The candlesticks were of brass, polished and gleaming. The deep carpet was dull of dye and design. Leather of books and ledgers in heavy cases of glass and oak, with the high safe in the far chimney-corner, and pegs for Mr. Cleeve's hat and cloak by the door, held the narrow space of the walls. The desk was so adjusted that Mr. Cleeve's features might be shadowed at will, while the features of client, customer or clerk, would be clear—at his will—to the light from the window, striking between the deep, blue curtains.

Mr. Cleeve entered the room. The door closed noiselessly. Mr. Cleeve glanced with impatience at the pile of letters on his desk, and slowly divested himself of hat, gloves and coat, and put on a loose, black, silken jacket. He adjusted the curtains against the clear light. His eyes were burning from his need of sleep. Concentration on the work of the day taxed his will, when he seated himself at his desk, and swiftly and methodically scanned, appraised, and determined values of the correspondence.

The thought of Isabel Cleeve and David

persisted, and distracted his mind. His disquiet was due far less to the certainty of the awakening of old scandal—the revival of the story that Mrs. Cleeve had fled with young George Faraday for England, and that shame and grief at betrayal had hastened the death of Charles—than to the haunting memory of her in that far time—the white and rose and golden beauty of her young womanhood.

How could so fair a creature have chosen the bloodless weakling Charles?

At the thought, escaping like a wraith from the grave of the past, Henry Cleeve felt the blood mounting shamefully to his brows. He swept his hand across his eyes, as though passionately to dispel the image of his brother's wife, mocking and alluring—and with the purpose to enforce the application of his mind to his work, he rang the bell for his chief clerk.

Mr. Joseph Allen was undersized of body, acute of eyes, mean of lips, and suave of tone. His blue-cloth coat, his white waistcoat, his starched linen, and his grey trousers strapped over polished shoes, were of superfine quality. Mr. Cleeve, shrewdly and contemptuously estimating the nature of the man, conceded his ability and loyalty to Cleeve & Cleeve—though with the hope that its name might be changed to Cleeve & Allen, in due course, and with proper recognition on the part of Mr. Henry Cleeve that the services of Mr. Joseph

Allen and young Mr. Richard Allen were indispensable, but the services of his nephew, David Cleeve, were not.

Mr. Allen advanced with a bow and a smile, displaying his prominent front teeth. At Mr. Cleeve's impatient look Mr. Allen's expression reverted to its normal suavity and self-importance.

"Sit down, Allen," Cleeve said.

Mr. Allen took the chair to Cleeve's right hand, and laid his papers on the desk, with the copy of the *Hobart Town Courier* uppermost. Cleeve saw that the list of fresh goods was pencilled heavily.

He leaned back in his chair, with an air of nonchalance. Well, Allen, anything of importance?"

Mr. Allen laid the sheet of the *Courier* before him. "You may not have had time to read this, sir?" he said.

Cleeve said impatiently: "I have read the list—yes. I have noticed the reference to the wines from the *Aurelia* and the vinegar, yes. I should be amused, but—" he shrugged his shoulders.

"But for the serious injury to sales of the consignment!" Mr. Allen ventured to complete the sentence on which Mr. Cleeve had paused.

"Injury! Nonsense!"

"But, sir!" Mr. Allen spluttered in protest.

"No injury at all! Our reputation is not likely to suffer from an unhappily-phrased list

published in the *Courier* if the error be noticed." -

"I assure you that it has been noticed, sir. Hallam, of the Walham Stores, said to me——"

Cleeves fingers tapped impatiently on the newspaper. "If you wish me to treat the blunder as important, Allen, I shall do so!"

"Decidedly, sir!"

"Then pray see to it that it does not occur again!"

"Certainly, sir! I shall speak with severity to Cleeve!"

"No need! See that all lists are duly checked before submission to the *Courier* office. Your duty, I think, Allen—and somewhat neglected!"

He took a sardonic pleasure in his kinsman's discomfiture, high colour, flicker of eyes, and bitter twist of lips. He said deliberately: "David is surely to be pardoned for blundering yesterday—in the light of your report to me?"

"How, sir?" Mr. Allen peered at him through his spectacles.

"Your report to me of the return of Mrs. Charles Cleeve to Hobart Town. Naturally, David knows of her return, and is distracted from his ordinary duties."

"You mean, sir, that she has dared to approach David?"

Cleeve's laughter was hard and contemptuous. "Why, to be sure! With what other

object should Mrs. Cleeve return? . . . Her motive is as natural as her appeal to the boy."

"But, Mr. Cleeve," Allen gasped, "you're not suggesting—you do not wish me to understand that you approve?"

"I am not suggesting. I do not wish you to understand!"

"I surmised from your words——"

"My dear Allen, surmise is unsafe—for you! Recognition of a fact as natural, or as unavoidable, does not necessarily imply approval of the fact. I do view the fact of Mrs. Charles Cleeve's return with no more satisfaction than her inevitable approach to David—as mother to son!"

"David should be told!" Allen protested. "Mrs. Allen said to me last night——"

"David should not be 'told'—as you term it. No one should be 'told'—as I meant it! Clearly, Allen, you have been quick to talk of Mrs. Cleeve's return."

"To my wife and son—yes!"

"To no one else?"

"To no one else! I am not eager to revive a scandal affecting the Family."

"The Family?" Henry's brows were uplifted.

"As a Cleeve on my mother's side," Allen said uneasily, "I have an honest pride in the Cleeve Family, and an interest in diverting scandal from it. Though—" he added hastily, at Henry's scowl and the gleam in his eyes—

"guided, to be sure, by your wishes as Head of the Family."

"My wishes? . . . My instructions are that you and your wife and son avoid gossip!" Cleeve said, with a look and tone of arrogance. "You should have been content with fulfilling your duty, in reporting to me that you had recognized Mrs. Cleeve near the Stores. You will please to convey my wishes—with my compliments"—his lips curled—"to Mrs. Allen. You will warn your son against gossip—prejudicial to his interests!"

"Certainly, sir!" Mr. Allen affected cheerful compliance.

"Thank you. . . . Your son—oh, yes. I thought to speak to you of your son!"

Mr. Allen's look was intent and eager: "Thank you, Mr. Cleeve."

"I have noticed his progress in the Stores with satisfaction."

"That's very gratifying to me, sir!"

"With satisfaction," Cleeve repeated. He has industry—and application to purpose!" Expression and tone betrayed no touch of satire. "He is a son worthy of you, my dear Allen! He should form as worthy a substitute for, or successor, to you in due course—as David to me!"

He pretended to ignore his chief clerk's resentful colour and chagrin. He leaned forward with an air of alertness: "We'll go through your papers quickly, Allen. . . . Will

you be good enough then to send my nephew to me; I think desirable that he act as my secretary; for the while, at least, he should be under my personal supervision. You may care to convey to your son an expression of my satisfaction."

"Certainly, Mr. Cleeve, thank you!" Mr. Allen had controlled expression and tone.

"Oh, and you may entrust to him the lists of imports for the *Courier*. I am confident that you will find them more reliable—and pleasing to you—than David's work, in circumstances which you deplore—in your loyalty and relationship to me and mine. Now, my dear Allen—" stretching out his hand for the files of papers.

CHAPTER X

FANTASY

M^R. CLEEVE had ordered that a desk for David, in the guise of his secretary, should be placed near the window of his room. He would have a small ante-room formed in the reconstruction of the counting-house, which he planned, he told Allen; but, in the meantime, he would have David in his own office.

Now, watching the lad bending over his writing of letters from notes which Cleeve had dictated, in reply to his correspondence, he knew from the distraction of his own thoughts, that concentration on his direction of the Stores and their trading would be impossible with the boy daily in his office.

He had not taken count or heed of his feeling toward David, till his control of him was menaced by Isabel Cleeve. His cynicism had allowed no admission of affection—even to himself. He had shown an easy, satiric kindness toward David since his childhood. He had not shown or encouraged display of sentiment. The boy was not his companion—his own cold pride and self-sufficiency repelled the thought of companionship, or of any possible equality of young David's mind

and will with his own mind and will. He was master of Cleeve & Cleeve—and of all the Cleeves. None was his equal or associate. The boy would be his heir and successor—the ruler, when Henry Cleeve laid down the rod of office; that was all.

In his remote watching of the fair, bending head, the pale cheek, and the nervous play of David's hand across the sheets of paper, the thin shoulders—and in the weariness which would have meant his dozing in his office on this mild, sunlit afternoon, but for the feverish activity of thoughts, Cleeve allowed, without challenge or rejection, the play of imagination!

His son sat with him in his office, sharing his duties, and engaged in his own interests and activities! . . . He cared—deeply he cared, must care—for his son—the continuance of his identity—of self down the years!

When the body of Henry Cleeve had passed to dust, the will and the mind of Henry Cleeve would function through the will and the mind of this being of his creation. The work of Henry Cleeve would go on down the generation. The structure of his life, which he thought splendid now—the Stores—would not fall to dust, as his mortal body must fall to dust, but would live the years after him. The Cleeve Stores of this day were the mere foundation of the great trading house to be. Walham planned so, but Walham had no son, only his niece, Rose! Walham planned that

the Walham Stores should grow with the growing Colony into a new John Company.

But Henry Cleeve was greater than the old East India servant—Henry Cleeve had a son! The sunlight glinted on young David's yellow hair—as long ago young Henry Cleeve had watched the sunlight fall on Isabel's golden hair. Again her image seemed to shape before Cleeve's eyes—in colour and in beauty, in taunt and in allurements; and having borne its share in dream or fantasy, was gone.

The breeze bore coolly through the open window the tang of the salt sea and the sweetness of spices, from the chests and bales loaded on the wharf. The thickness of tea, coffee, tobacco, and spices, of wine from casks, and of provisions smoked, dried, or salted, in tubs and barrels—hung heavily always on the air of the Cleeve Stores. The odours were not dispelled by the fresh air which Cleeve sought in his own room.

The Stores glowed with the dyes of silks, and shimmered with satins and muslins, silver-white, or delicately hued, and exquisitely designed—with all the richness of English tastes and fashions and looms, and not a little of such splendour as flowed into England through the East India Company.

The very wafting of the spices from the consignment by the merchantman at anchor accorded with the fantasy. Cleeve conjured a vision of trading with the East, and the

concentration on the Port through his House of the products of India and China. His vision was rich with silk, and dyed with gold.

And year by year the golden harvest of this generous earth—the black soil of the Island turned to the plough; the rolling sea of wheat and oats like samite to the sunlight through this month, and like red gold through harvest weeks to be. The whale oil from the fisheries about the Island and to the north and the south. The hides, the mimosa bark, and the wool from the ever-increasing flocks of the Colony. . . . Yes, the manufactures of Europe and the East should pass through the House of Cleeve & Cleeve. The products of the Colony should pass through the House of Cleeve & Cleeve, for shipment over the world.

And these new pastures of Port Phillip? . . . John Batman's story of the expedition to Port Phillip for Joseph Tice Gellibrand and his fellow-members of the Association had seemed to Cleeve a traveller's tale—Batman told of a mile on mile of kangaroo grass beyond compare in Van Diemen's Land. The Association claimed that, as its agent, Batman had bartered with the Chiefs of the Black tribes for 600,000 acres at Port Phillip, and that the vast territory was its possession by right of purchase—for beads and blankets! . . . Henry Cleeve's lips were satiric.

Mile on mile of pasture? . . . The flocks of the Association were moving north for ship-

ment from the River Tamar for Port Phillip. A Settlement had been formed—a village founded on the River Yarra Yarra, which should develop into a town. Gellibrand, at the latest meeting of the Political Association, had declared that he was weary of the tyranny of Governor Arthur and his officialdom in Van Diemen's Land—he would be off soon to Port Phillip. Gellibrand, great lawyer, and greater patriot, was no mere idealist dreaming only of the free Colony which he would found—while Governor Arthur plotted to bring Port Phillip under his domination, and Governor Bourke from Sydney proclaimed the Association's land to be the territory of New South Wales, within the boundaries of his Commission, and Gellibrand and Batman and their fellow-Colonists of the Association to be trespassers—mere squatters! . . .

Gellibrand, Swanston and Wedge, of the Association, were men of affairs—men of supreme ability. Their Colony—their town—should prosper in defiance of the Governor of New South Wales! From fantastic thought and dreaming, the mind of Henry Cleeve passed to swift plan and purpose. He must know more of Port Phillip, and this movement of the Colonists from the Island across Bass Strait, and the shipment of flocks, and the diversion of the wool trade from Hobart Town! The exports of Cleeve & Cleeve must not be prejudiced—he must know more of

Port Phillip! He would wait on Gellibrand—or His Excellency, Lieutenant-Governor Arthur himself—or Henry Arthur! . . .

David was busied still with his writing. Cleeve, glancing at him, saw with new emotion, the play of sunlight across the fair and curling hair. The resemblance to Isabel Cleeve—whom Henry Cleeve had loved—struck mind and imagination.

The boy was vital to him, his House, and his ambition—and for the relief of the sense of loneliness deepening with ^{the} years!

Vital as a son! . . .

He must wait on Isabel—at once! He must dislodge her from Hobart Town, and destroy the association with the boy, for it was dangerous to the House of Cleeve and its master; by any means he must dislodge her—by threat or by appeal!

David! The House! Fulfilment of the dream of Henry Cleeve of greatness, enduring work—enduring race. David! . . . His son! . . .

The clock on the chimney-shelf struck five. Cleeve started from reverie and fantasy.

“Give me the letters to sign, David. It is growing late. You must walk home this evening. I need the carriage for a visit I have to pay.”

CHAPTER XI

ISABEL, RACHEL, HENRY

DAVID laid the last letter for the day before Mr. Cleeve, who read it quickly, signed and sealed it, and tossed it into the basket of letters to be sent out that evening.

"A very good day's work, David," Mr. Cleeve paid compliment. "You write clearly and with reasonable accuracy." He rose, washed his hands, brushed his hair, and put on his coat. He took his gloves, hat and cane, and he turned to David, smiling: "You will be happier with me than with Mr. Allen?" he asked.

"I should be, Uncle Henry, thank you."

"Now what do you mean by that, David?" Cleeve gazed intently at the boy's white face, and look of weariness and dejection.

David hesitated, coloured slightly, and said sombrely: "But for my Mother, sir, and for my thinking of the injustice to her. . . . And not having made up my mind——"

"Not having made up your mind, David?"

"How to help her; how to be with her, and work for her."

"Cleeve's voice was calm and yet resentful: "You think to leave me, David?"

David nodded: "Yes, Uncle Henry."

"David, you forget that your Father made me your guardian, and that you are only twenty years of age. I have authority over you, and I may exercise it. But—" lowering his tone, and eyeing the boy kindly and tolerantly—"I do not think to exercise it harshly."

"What do you mean, sir?" David asked wearily and sullenly.

"My dear David, this is not the place or the time to talk of all this. Will you drive with me as far as Elizabeth Street—I can go that way?"

"No, thank you."

"Pray tell your Aunt that I may be late, and beg her not to wait dinner for me."

Noting David's scowl, Cleeve asked sharply: "You are going home, David?"

"No!"

"You intend to go to see your Mother?"

"Yes!"

"Oblige me, at least," Cleeve said, controlling his anger, "by postponing your visit until this evening, David. Will you do this?"

David asked slowly: "Where are you going? . . . Is it to Miss Welland's house? Thinking to threaten——?"

"It's not my habit," Cleeve said, with anger and disdain, "to let you question or dictate my movements or actions. It is not my habit to threaten women."

He turned and marched from his office, pausing only to order the office-boy to collect the letters from his room. His carriage was drawn up at the door. He directed his coachman to drive him to Warwick Street and Miss Welland's house. He stepped in, and for the enjoyment of the sweet breeze from the sea, he let down the carriage glass, and took off his hat. He leaned back on the cushions, folded his arms, and in dark and gloomy reflections, he did not heed the stir and movement of the waterside or the market-place.

He was driven over the bridge and up the hill, and past the Prisoners' Barracks. He was carried swiftly by Campbell Street to the steep ascent of the hill by Warwick Street. He drew out his watch, as the carriage halted before the gate of Rachel Welland's house—it was not six o'clock. He stepped down from the carriage, hesitant now, liking his mission ill, averse from meeting Rachel Welland for this first time through so many years, and from the thought of conflict with Isabel Cleeve—yet lured by the longing again to see her, and to hear her voice—acknowledging this longing to himself, and finding, in the motive of protecting David from injurious association, no shred of justification for himself. He might have found justification, but for his longing.

The gate was unlocked and he entered the garden. In his absorption he was conscious of serenity and beauty in the garden—the stone-

flagged path to the white door, the mown lawn of a vivid green in the shadowed sunlight and the sea wind; the jade-green wall of the cypresses, the lilies in the shelter of the house wall, and about the sundial, the shade, and the soft fanning of the pine boughs on either side of the house.

He halted on seeing Rachel Welland in the pine shadow to the right. He affected cool composure, from will and from no lack of emotion or of self-consciousness, so seeing her—tall and grey and growing old—the blackness of her gown not relieved by any jewel or by fineness of lace at throat—her pallor not relieved by any colour mounting to her wan cheeks, or light of gladness or of anger shining in her calm eyes.

He bared his head, drew off his glove, and advanced. He knew his aspect as his voice, controlled, saying with stiff bow, scarcely acknowledged by her: "Miss Welland, I beg you to forgive this intrusion—at this hour of the day."

She said: "This hour is much as any hour to me, sir. You wish to see Mrs. Cleeve?"

"By your leave—and hers," he said, his eyes as dispassionate and direct in gaze as hers; he believed that she thought to refuse, and that her voice was lowered to conceal from him his ability even to anger her: "Pray, follow me! I shall tell Mrs. Cleeve that you are here."

She led the way to the parlour, going slowly, and without sign of agitation, yet he believed that she contended with emotion—whether of hate for him or through the quickening of memories of her love for him and his regard for her—he could not conjecture. His thought was tinged by no satire or self-conceit that he should stir emotion in her in their late middle-age. His mind reverted to the cause of their estrangement, and formulated the ironic thought that Isabel Cleeve should find in Rachel Welland's house her sanctuary or refuge in Van Diemen's Land!

He was stirred at least by his memory of the faded, gracious furniture of the parlour, from its association with his courtship of Rachel Welland and their estrangement. Rachel had built the house only on her father's death—he had been the partner in the firm of Cleeve & Welland in Sydney, and had retired from the firm shortly after the transfer to Hobart Town. Rosewood, brocade, miniatures, fine china and silver were as Henry Cleeve had known them in the Welland room. He rejected with satire for himself the appeal of memories. Sentiments were dead—without the fragrance to him of the rose jars! How should he remember Rachel Welland's dark, good looks of that far time, seeing this woman faded, wan, and shrewish of tongue, if he were to judge, by her cold eyes and the hard lines of her lips?

She said: "Sit down, please," and left him. He laid his hat and gloves and cane on the table and sat down, choosing his chair so that he might watch from shadow if Isabel Cleeve received him and listened to him. His action was instinctive—from his habit in his office. Isabel must be an opponent to him, as any client. Waiting, alone, he had the secret thought that, if she sat facing him in that chair by the window, he might watch the play of emotion on the lovely face, light illumining and shadow clouding her eyes. Shadows—shadows—how should this meeting—any meeting of this time or of the narrow future—mean other than cruel hurt to her from him in his own hurt?

The curtains fluttered and divided in the doorway. Isabel Cleeve stood before him, and as he rose and made his stiff and stately bow, she halted, and was so pale and colourless to him in the curtained shadow of the doorway, and without words or inclination of her head, that for the instant reality was merged with fantasy. This white-robed form was visionary as his resurgent memories of her.

When she stepped forward, and the evening light was clear upon her, the spell was broken; he was master of his emotions—boldly and arrogantly confronting her, and to her lifeless words in question: "You wish to speak to me? On what, please?" replying: "To ask you why you have returned, and to persuade you to

leave Hobart Town in David's interest and your own!"

He proffered the chair in the clear light from the windows. She ignored this, but she moved forward to the open window, so that the light was fully on her, and the little breeze fluttering the faded muslin of her dress. But for her paleness, and the sorrow of her eyes, and the pride and strength suggested by her lips, she seemed unchanged to him—save that she was more beautiful, and matched by his memories of her as his brother's wife, and by his taste for decoration and display of silks and gold, poorly and shabbily attired, even though attaining beauty and distinction. His thoughts seemed fantastic—of an ivory-white silk, displayed to him from the merchantman's consignment received in the Stores that day, and of its worthiness of her—a precious, painted, silken fan and earrings with exquisitely long drops of gold!

Her immobility and silence must have disconcerted him, but for his arrogance and his determination, in this new conflict of their wills, not to be baffled by her. He repeated now: "I am here to ask you why you have returned, and to persuade you to leave Hobart Town!" And he would have met mockery from her with satire, but he was embarrassed by the lifeless tone of her reply:

"I have the right, sir, to go whither I will, but you no right to question me!"

He countered instantly: "I waive the question of right or no right. I ask no further questions, but I state my attitude on your return and your approach to David as briefly, and as calmly, as may spare you—and myself!"

He paused; she watched him, standing motionless still and in silence.

"You recognize the view which must be ours—my sisters'—mine—on your return! You know that I am David's guardian. My brother's will excluded you from guardianship—natural for you in other circumstances—stating his reasons for excluding you, and directing that any claims of yours to the boy should be contested, and the cause of his alienation from you, and repudiation of you, made plain in the Court. Else, secrecy was scrupulously to be observed. No one must know, for his son's sake!"

He showed no discomposure, but he watched her coldly and arrogantly still, hearing her whispered words: "Had he known, had he guessed, would he have added—for his brother's sake?"

He said, inflexibly: "David is my heir. He has been brought up as my son, with a certainty of succession to me. He has been dutiful—till your return. He must be alienated from me and mine—as from his own interests—by your influence as his Mother, by his natural championship of you, and by your

assertion to him that you were cruelly and unjustly treated by your husband, as by us all. Not knowing the truth! Not guessing the truth! Your strength against us lies in the natural response of son to mother, and in our silence."

She said slowly: "You are at liberty to tell him the truth."

He retorted, impassively: "You know that impossible for me."

He was conscious of no mockery in look or tone, but only of that lack of emotion, of anger, or of hurt, or of desire to hurt, and he was disquieted still by this, and weakened. Only the rigid exercise of will controlled by his own emotions. His very love of her those years ago had spelt defeat to him. The reality of her was merged with memories of her—memories in conflict with him now.

She murmured: "I know this impossible for you—and me."

"Then, pray listen to me stating possibilities and facts," he urged. "Not touching on the past again, in conversation with you, except in its relation to the fact or possibility of the future. Will you do this?"

"Yes, I listen."

"Easily you may defy me; you may alienate David from me and my house. At a word from you he leaves my house for yours; he relinquishes all rights and claims upon me; all hopes from me. He faces life with you, as you

know life—cruelly, I fear—as he does not know life, and, as my heir, cannot know life. This is your power over your son.”

She assented: “Yes, this is my power.”

“And of this power,” he said, “from his belief in you—his confidence in aught and all that you have told him—is there no proof that should appeal to you?”

“Proof! I do not understand you.”

“I think you understand.”

“No!”

“Proof, then, that in my guardianship of him and care of him, directed by my affection for him, I have made of him a son in whom you must have felt—must feel—a pride!”

Faint colour was in Isabel’s cheeks now, and faint light in her eyes. She said: “He is my son, as I would have my son!”

“He is to me,” he said, bowing his head, “as I would have my son.”

She sighed and turned from him, and looked out over the garden. He took up hat and gloves and cane from the little table. He said: “I have no thought to distress you more deeply than I must distress you in the boy’s interests. Here, then, are my decisions, and my purpose. I ask of you dispassionate consideration. His future is dependent on your separation from him. I need not stress to you the prosperity of our House, or the wealth and place which must be his, if you accede to my wishes. I do not offer to you any recompense for your

voluntary withdrawal from Hobart Town, and from his life. Knowing you, I am conscious that such an offer would seem an insult to you. Still, in the event of your withdrawal, my will shall be unchanged, and David inherit all. I shall instruct my lawyers that provision now be made for my brother's widow, and her return to England, and her residence there. . . . I do not ask your immediate decision and reply."

"I reply now," she said, not looking at him. "No!"

"I do not accept your reply as your decision yet!"

"David must decide."

"You will decide—not David."

Her laughter sounded faintly, and her voice was mocking: "Having this estimate of me—this touching confidence in me—why blacken my reputation to my son?"

"I have uttered against you," he said, coldly, "no word in censure of you to your son."

"But telling him I was dead?"

"Better to tell him so!"

"And when he knew me living still—telling him that I must be dead to him."

"And now repeating this to you."

The mocking note persisted—she did not raise her voice, or turn to look at him: "Is this your verdict on me?"

He did not reply. He stepped to the open window, and paused only to say: "Pray make

my apologies to Miss Welland for this intrusion. I bid you good evening."

He bowed, and walked to the gateway and the carriage, head high and aspect arrogant. He had the thought of her as standing, slim and white, and golden-haired—lovelier and more alluring than in that far time; and of the faint mockery of her eyes watching him, and her lips, and the whispered words: "Is this your verdict on me?"

CHAPTER XII

BY THE SUNDIAL

AT the sounds of the departing carriage Rachel returned to the garden, and resumed the watering of her flowers, parched by the sunlight and the sea breeze.

The lily stems were headed and heavy with buds. The graceful buds of moss roses were opening. Shadows were gliding over the garden. Rachel did not approach or glance at the open windows, though aware that Isabel stood there, white against the dusk of the room—if Isabel wished to confide in her, or needed consolation from her, she would call to her, or would come to her in the garden.

Rachel walked slowly to the sundial. The ground was damp about the lily bulbs. She set down the water-can and leaned against the sundial, her fingers idly tracing its circle, and her thought ironic—the sundial's record, which few heeded, symbolized time in the secluded garden of her own life. None heeded, none cared. The hours—the years—passed vainly.

Isabel——?

At least she had befriended Isabel, loving her and believing in her affection. No jealous doubt or suspicion had clouded their friend-

ship—from their girlhood to the time of their talk of Henry Cleeve last night—the broken engagement, and Rachel's reason.

Isabel's words, showing doubt and fear: "Rachel, you don't thing . . . you can't mean . . . I was the cause? . . ."

And Henry Cleeve's coming now to the house, asking for Isabel, with look and tone that betrayed——?

Nothing of hate or fear, such as the Cleeves should feel against Isabel, on her return to Hobart Town, reviving the scandal of that distant time. Arrogance—yes—but arrogance was natural to Henry Cleeve, and was enhanced by his ability and prosperity. No hate—yet Isabel at will could take David from him, and his plan of life. . . . He had come confidently to the house—not blustering, not threatening. . . .

And approaching, as a stranger, Rachel Welland, who loved him still.

She did not heed Isabel's coming from the house till she stood by the sundial and murmured: "Rachel!" And at her white and stricken looks Rachel dispelled instantly her doubts and fears, and stretched out her hands, and facing her, she touched her shoulders gently and compassionately, asking: "What has he said? What has he threatened?"

Isabel stood silent, not trembling, and not looking at her, but staring before her.

Rachel said bitterly: "I know that he has ordered you to leave Hobart Town—yes—not to come between David and the sunlight of his favour."

Isabel whispered: "Did you hear?"

"No, I did not hear him. I know that he would speak so—order so. It is his habit to order—not to ask."

"Rachel—he did not order—openly. He threatened—yes, but not me—David, if I did not go out of David's life—and I should not have thought to return to it. Dear Heaven, I shouldn't have thought to return—even for love—even for longing to see my son! If I did not give up David, he said, David must suffer . . . lose all . . . face life with me."

"Isabel," Rachel said, "he will face life with you. He loves you, and he has the manhood to face and defeat Henry Cleeve—for your sake. For his own."

Isabel Cleeve said slowly: "Yes . . . if I allow this . . . yes. . . . Nothing will count to him except me. Nothing that Henry Cleeve can offer to him. . . . Only, it's strange, Rachel, isn't it, that David . . . David——"

"Loves you! No!"

"No! Perhaps not. He's so dear. . . . But it wasn't that. I didn't mean that; only . . . that David should be just as I would have wished—just as I would have tried to teach him to be, if he had been with me all this time, and not with Henry Cleeve."

Rachel Welland's hands sank to her sides. She drew back to the deepening shadow from the house against the clouding west. Hearing or speaking thence, for the while she did look at Isabel. She held to the shadow as though it veiled expression, traces of emotion, anger, or pain.

"I do not understand this," Isabel said, "knowing Henry Cleeve. I do not think my son so strong of will. No boy is of so strong a will as not to be moulded by Henry Cleeve if brought up by him. I think—I think that had he willed he might have made my son hate me and despise me, Rachel, and believe, as Serena and her sister and the cousins believe me—worthless and wicked. . . . And yet David loves me, not thinking as they think."

Rachel muttered from the shadows: "He has been taught to think as Henry Cleeve thinks—in all else."

Isabel glanced sharply at her: "Rachel, you are not angry with me, are you?"

"No, I'm not angry."

"Why did you speak in such a tone to me?"

"Thinking of Henry Cleeve!"

"Not of me?"

"Not . . . of . . . you!"

"Rachel, I could not bear that you should think harshly of me."

"I am your friend."

"My only friend. And Heaven knows that I need friendship, and guidance. No, not

guidance. Having to act, as I shall act—at once.”

“Obeying Henry Cleeve?”

“Yes, Rachel, obeying him.”

“Leaving Hobart Town, and your son? Giving him up to them for ever?”

“Rachel, did Henry speak to you for long before you called me?”

Rachel’s laughter sounded harshly from the shadow: “No! Why do you ask?”

“Your knowing!”

“Don’t be so foolish, Isabel. Naturally, I guessed. . . . Why else should he come here? You have decided to go and leave David, though you love David. Why are you doing this?”

“For David’s sake,” she whispered.

“For David’s sake, you’ll stay.”

Isabel sighed. “Oh, if I dared—if only I dared! If I had ever so little money! . . . But I haven’t! Saving the money to come back here to Hobart Town meant all that time, teaching, teaching! . . . Else I’d have come long ago. I know I shouldn’t have gone away. I shouldn’t have been frightened into going away. I shouldn’t have left David with them, all that while ago!”

“That can’t matter now,” Rachel sneered. “But leaving him now—playing for Cleeve—giving him body and soul into his keeping. . . . Dreaming that because of Henry Cleeve the boy cares for you. As the boy would care,

finding you as he pictured you—his mother—all the years that he thought you dead. . . . Would they have dared to speak evil of you, telling him you were dead? Do even the Cleeves speak ill of the dead? . . . Would they have dared speak evil of a boy's dead mother, and have hoped to hold him to them—hoped to have him care for them—wanting him to care?"

Isabel's head was bowed. Rachel saw her fingers trace and tremble on the circle of the sundial.

She said: "If you stay here—if the boy works like a man for his mother, Henry Cleeve will disinherit him. He threatens this. You need not tell me."

Isabel nodded. Still her fingers traced the circle of the hours.

Rachel whispered fiercely through the dusk: "How should you think still kindly of Henry Cleeve?"

"Did I speak kindly of him, Rachel?"

"Gently, then. Your voice trembling and soft for his very name. What is the truth, Isabel?"

"The truth?"

"What was Henry Cleeve to you long ago? What does he mean to you?"

CHAPTER XIII

THE GARDEN OF THE SHADOWS

DAVID left the Stores a quarter of an hour after Henry Cleeve's departure. He had been delayed by Allen, to explain defective entries in his ledger, now abandoned.

He thought at once to follow in the track of Uncle Henry to Miss Welland's house. He had no doubt of Uncle Henry's destination, or his purpose—to prevent the association, which to David had become—within these few hours—the dearest of his life.

For all the boy's starved and stunted love had taken magical vitality and blossom and fragrance. Not the beauty of Isabel Cleeve alone, not her appeal, or her sorrows, not this vivid and sweet reality for the imagined dead, swayed David's heart and mind—his love for her was greater through the very loneliness of childhood and youth. He could admire and be afraid of Henry Cleeve—he could not love him. Serena Cleeve, as any of the Cleeves—his Aunt Susannah, his Uncle James Learoyd, the Allen cousins—were like so many blurs and shadows to his life, colourless and toneless as the decorations of his room. Friends of his years were few, and sweethearts, in the Cleeve

circle, none, though he admired Anne Hope, Learoyd's ward. None really counted—nothing could count—matched with his Mother. For the thought of her, menaced by Henry Cleeve—though David could not conjecture Cleeve's authority with her, or any peril from him to her—rage and hate against Cleeve surged through his mind. He hurried into Campbell Street, and climbed the hills.

He did not pass the Cleeve carriage on his way toward Miss Welland's house, and it was not drawn up before the gateway. Uncle Henry might not have visited the house. His anger at David's questions in his office might have been due only to his resentment at his daring to ask his purpose. Or his visit to the house might have been brief, and the carriage have been driven down into Elizabeth Street, as the shorter route home.

David walked more slowly to the gate, and stood hesitant before it. He had promised his Mother that he would avoid quarrelling with Uncle Henry—would not leave his house, and would not endanger his employment in the Stores, but go about his duties as though nothing had happened. And by disobeying Uncle Henry—not putting off his visit to his Mother till the evening—he had broken his word to her.

David saw that the gate was slightly ajar. He did not ring the bell, but slowly he entered the garden. The shadows were now deeper,

from the clouding evening, and from the house and the trees.

He advanced unseen and unheard by Isabel Cleeve and Rachel Welland at the sundial—though seeing them, and hearing them clearly—in quarrel, surely!

And at Rachel's fierce question: "What was Henry Cleeve to you long ago? What does he mean to you?"—he was instantly afraid, and stood confused, and staring through the shadows, not daring to approach. He heard his Mother's gasping words: "Nothing to me! What should he be to me? Rachel, how can you suggest?"

And Rachel Welland's voice, grown shrill and cruel: "Was it you who took my lover from me? . . . Was it because of him your husband named you wanton, and turned you from his door?"

And his Mother's shuddering outcry and gesticulations: "No! . . . I tell you no, Rachel! . . . No!"

Rachel Welland's laughter was dreadful to the boy: "I did not believe that it was Faraday. I knew that you did not leave Hobart Town because of Faraday, though you told me it was because of him—your husband's jealousy of him—Charles turned you out of doors. . . . No! . . . It was Henry. . . . Henry! . . . You took him from me! You spoiled life for me, pretending friendship!"

"Rachel . . . I tell you . . . no! I tell you

I was faithful to you, as my friend, and loyal to my husband! . . . It was as I have told you always . . . always. Henry Cleeve was nothing to me."

"No?" Rachel Welland sneered. "No? . . . You loyal friend and wife—you doting mother! . . . David's the son of Henry Cleeve! . . ."

David recoiled. White, stricken, shuddering, he crept to the gate. Out of sight of darkling, vengeful face, and of fair, shamed face—out of hearing of fierce attack and charge—his Mother's cry: "No, don't say it, Rachel! Don't dare to say it!"

And of her sobbing.

CHAPTER XIV

QUESTIONS TO HENRY CLEEVE

CLEEVE, on returning to his house, found Serena scarcely less afraid of new and calamitous developments in the affair of David and Isabel Cleeve than embittered by the injuries to the soup and fish and joint, due to the lateness of her brother's homecoming, and the deplorable and unprecedented delay of dinner.

Cleeve silenced her scolding with a scowl, and with the muttered words: "David should have brought my message to you from the Stores!" But he hastened to wash, and to make change of linen: and the dinner proved unspoiled by the delay of service.

He was silent and abstracted during the meal. David did not return. To Miss Serena's anxious and indignant question, Cleeve replied, with an air of indifference: "Probably he is with his Mother, in defiance of my orders," and again scowl and tone compelled the silence of his sister.

Still, Cleeve's cold anger with David did not exclude from his mind concern for Miss Serena's anxiety—with the memory of her confession of her affection for the boy, and her

appeal to save him from association with Isabel Cleeve. He did not linger over the wine. He did not go at once to the study, but he went to the parlour, and found Serena seated by the fire, and weeping quietly to herself. She endeavoured hastily to control herself, and to conceal from him the traces of her tears on her cheeks, but she failed.

Standing by the hearth, and looking down at her gloomily, yet with sympathy, he said: "I waited on Mrs. Charles at Miss Welland's house. That was the cause of my delay in arriving home. David must have followed me from the Stores, and must be with her now, and discussing my visit and my terms to her. I think your concern for him unnecessary. Serena, David will return in time. Mrs. Charles will leave Hobart Town——"

"She has promised to do so?" Serena cried, with the shrillness of relief. "You compelled her to promise! How?"

"No matter!" he said. "She will leave Hobart Town, and with her departure David will come to his senses. Pray accept my assurance, Serena, and spare me from describing my interview with her. I prefer not to describe or discuss it."

She looked strangely at him, with tearful eyes. "Is she much changed, Henry?" she asked.

"I cannot say. I paid little heed to her—and less to Miss Welland, who received me.

Mrs. Charles seemed to me to have kept her good looks, but I saw her only for a little while."

"But did she really promise that she would go away?"

"Not in so many words, but she will go, Serena."

"How can you say this, Henry?"

"From my knowledge of her," he said, with a look and in a tone of impatience. "According to my memory of her, she is swayed more by sentiment than by any mercenary or vindictive motives. She will not injure her son voluntarily."

"How—not injure him?"

"Surely it is clear how. She knows from me that the continuance of the association with her, and defiance of my wishes, mean the loss of employment and prospects. She has no means of her own—how should she have? What has she to offer to him to recompense him for the consequences of alienation from me?"

Again she looked at him strangely. She asked only: "Why did she come back from England, then? Where did she find the money?"

"She came back only to see her son. I do not find it in me to reproach her for this, knowing her sentiment. She is loyal when she chooses. . . . Do you reproach her for coming back only to see her son?"

Serena hesitated. "No, I can't reproach her."

"Or, having found David as we have moulded him in character," he said, his satiric lips negating suggestion of arrogance or self-satisfaction, "is she to be reproached that she longs for the restoration of her rights and privileges as his Mother?"

She muttered: "No! If she gives him up!"

"If she gives him up, Serena, and she will give him up, what sentiment should be ours towards her, except pity?"

She did not reply. She touched her eyes with her handkerchief.

He looked gloomily down at her. "Your affection for him, as you told it to me last night," he said, as he turned to the door, "should teach you the reply, Serena."

She did not speak still. He went from the parlour to the study, and rang for Acres to adjust the lights. He sat down at his desk, to study and determine the problems of his agents' reports on trade with Sydney. In spite of the emotional stress of his meeting with Isabel Cleeve, his sense of humiliation and his dark passion at the cold contempt of her words, his mind was so far schooled that thoughts were compelled and concentrated on the reports; grasp of them was attained, and procedure planned for the development and the enrichment of the trade of Cleeve & Cleeve. The prospect of the swift and vigorous growth of the Port Phillip Settlement reverted to his mind, and was reviewed, and the decision

reached of shipments of goods, with migrants and stock by the Cleeve schooners, from the Tamar to the new Settlement.

He must discuss with Mr. Gellibrand and his fellow-members of the Port Phillip Association the scope of their scheme of colonization. He must be safeguarded against the exaggerations of the prejudices of interested parties. He must have his report from one of his agents. The opportunity should be for David to visit Port Phillip and observe, and report to him its progress, and estimate its prospects. Yes, he must speak to Mr. Gellibrand of the means and facilities for inspection. David. . . .

The striking of the hour of nine by the clock on the chimney-shelf was associated with the thought of David, and destroyed the concentration of his mind on affairs and activities of Cleeve & Cleeve. Doubts and fears were loosened. David should have returned. He was with Isabel. She had spun about him the web of her blandishments and sorrows. She was avenging herself after all the years.

Cleeve's confidence in her response to his play upon her emotions, sentiments, and notions of self-sacrifice for the boy's sake, had been frustrated—as long ago. Elusive then, she eluded him now by her art, her witcheries, her beauty, and by that power beyond compare or count—of Mother over the heart and soul of son. . . .

He was tormented by the defeat of his own

power over the boy rather than by jealousy or by chagrin at the humiliation of his proud and dominant will. He knew the vanity and futility of material triumphs for his House—of wealth and eminence in the young Colony. Gilded fruits that were dust and ashes to the mouth! A visionary feast of life that spent satiety to the mind and starvation to the soul! . . .

Passion, rekindled out of the embers that had seemed dead, yet had tormented heart and spirit down the years, possessed him. The infinite longing not to be appeased. . . . The structure of his life, which seemed to other men fashioned from the marble and the gold of achievement, was no more than the gloomy prison-house of his own soul.

He struck his hand passionately upon his desk. The papers fluttered, the ink splashed, and the pen fell to the floor. He started up, and moved to the bell-rope to ring, thinking to order his carriage, and to drive again to Rachel Welland's house, and confront David with Isabel, and by his authority—by a power which must have seemed fantastic to him in the light of cold reason, yet credible now, with the disorder of his thoughts and sense of mental sickness, and of bodily weakness strange to him—still to defeat her, and compel obedience from the boy.

He was not conscious of his reeling slightly as he crossed the floor. Yet he was conscious,

as he stretched out his hand to the rope, of the recurrence of pain-like stabbing at his heart, and of dull wonder and resentment at this swift, shattering, and passing sense of agony, and of enfeebled and trembling hands, and of a dank sweat starting at his brows.

He steadied himself momentarily against the chimney-shelf, with the indefinite thought and fear of the recurrence of this agony, and of so resting for avoidance of it; but, his mind growing clear and confident, with no such recurrence, he wiped his forehead with his handkerchief, and, not ringing, he took decanter and glass from a lacquer cabinet in the chimney-corner. He filled the glass and drank—the old, ripe port defeated weakness.

He must find time from the Stores—not to-morrow, perhaps on Saturday—to consult his doctor on experience, cause, and remedy.

He had set the glass on the table, when his sense of dignity was outraged by the sudden opening of the door without knocking, or his leave to enter the study. His indignation passed instantly at the sight of David in the doorway. He would have wondered at his white look, and the misery of his eyes and his parted lips, but for his belief that the boy had been with Isabel, and that she had told him of his own interview with her, and his order—or appeal—to her, and her decision to leave Hobart Town—he did not doubt the decision.

He affected good humour easily through his

acute pleasure at the boy's return. He greeted him: "Well, David, have you made your peace with Aunt Serena for the danger to the dinner?" But he was checked by recognition of the boy's immobility and frozen look, and the pitiless and accusing light of his eyes. He said, quietly: "Pray, come in, and close the door, if you wish to speak to me, David. Don't stand there like that."

David advanced. The door swung at his back. Again he halted, and still he stared at Henry Cleeve, and though his lips twisted, as if he struggled for expression of passion or despair, he did not speak.

Cleeve was affected less by the aspect of the boy than by his cruel understanding of his resemblance to his Mother—as long ago—that night of the last bitter quarrel with Charles, and his repudiation of her.

She had seemed so to Henry Cleeve—eyes levelling the accusation, which, through her torment and shame and passion, could not pass her lips.

He said now—and his voice was calm and controlled, as though his will were poised and watchful for defence: "What is the matter with you, David? Are you sick?"—and he stepped forward, and his cool gaze was measured against a look of hatred. The boy not speaking still, Cleeve asked in higher, more commanding tones: "I ask you what is the matter? Answer me! . . . You've been with your

Mother—is that it? She told you of my waiting on her, and of my asking her to leave Hobart Town—for your sake and her own?”

“I’ve . . . not been with her . . . no! . . . I’ve not heard . . . yet I know. . . .”

“And knowing,” Cleeve said, “you must understand—you must compel yourself to understand—the significance which I attach to her association with you, and my disapproval, and my motives?”

“I know . . . nothing. . . . I guess . . . who I am . . . what happened long ago!” The boy’s voice rose from its huskiness to sudden shrillness and clearness. “I guess who I am, I say; and why you don’t want her in Hobart Town!”

Cleeve said impassively: “Only because of you, and because of the past and its significance, and pain, and terror to us all—but chiefly its hurt to you!”

“No! That isn’t true! That isn’t why!”

“David, I’ll not suffer such insolence from you!”

“But you’ll answer me—you’ll answer! You’ll tell me . . . why you let her suffer then, and let her suffer now, while you . . . while you escaped and escape still, and are thought high and honourable, and devout, like the Governor . . . your friend the Governor . . . all your friends . . . all you Cleeves!”

Cleeve drew back to the hearth. His features were like a fine, white mask. His left hand was

motionless as marble in its rest upon the shelf.

"David, I fear you are beside yourself. What do you mean? What has your Mother told you?"

"Wait! . . . Listen! . . . It was half-dark with the shadows in the garden at Miss Welland's. Shadows. They did not see me in the shadows. I heard Miss Welland accuse my Mother . . . and say . . . I am your son! . . . I'll not believe it is the truth. . . . I'll not believe . . . anything . . . hurting . . . my Mother! . . . Only—only answer me! . . . Why do you stand so, silent and sneering so? Why don't you tell me?"

"What should I tell you, David?" Cleeve's words were slow and measured, and his eyes were intent and calculating.

"The truth! . . . Oh, God, the truth!"

"I shall not answer such a question, David."

"Not deny it? Not . . . for her sake . . . mine?"

"I say I'll not answer the question, David!"

"I say you shall answer!"

"Then, no!"

"That's not the truth—not——"

"How would you have me answer, David?"

CHAPTER XV

MOONLIGHT AND CLOUD

FROM midday David had eaten nothing, and from the hour of his leaving the office he had not rested. Since his flight from Rachel Welland's garden, with devastating knowledge from disclosure, as he believed, he had known no peace or quiet of mind. He had not returned at once to Henry Cleeve's house, but had made his way from Warwick Street across the stream and into the Government Paddock, and had walked through darkness. If he had sat down on rock or bank by the roadside, rest of body had been counteracted by the fever of his mind; this had allowed no respite to him, and had driven him on—about the Paddock and into the New Town Road, and so by Elizabeth Street and Macquarie Street to the house—and his questions of Henry Cleeve.

On going from the study, he stumbled to the staircase, but with the thought that Cleeve had waited on his Mother to drive her out of Hobart Town, and that she might leave Miss Welland's house that night, after the quarrel and cruel insult to her, he halted. He must go to the Welland house at once, and find his Mother,

if she were there still, or learn whither she had gone.

Buoyed up by feverish excitement, he was conscious of no weariness or hunger, but he was parched with thirst. He hurried to the dining-room. The table was set still in readiness for him. He drank glass after glass of water, but he did not touch food.

Serena, crossing the hall from the parlour, faced him when he went from the room. She was pale and trembling; her hands were outstretched towards him, and her voice yearning, and appealing:

"David, my dear! . . . Oh, you look so sick and white! You're faint for food, surely! Let me ring, and have them send in your dinner for you. I told them to keep it hot for you . . . David, don't go! Sit down, and rest, and let me talk to you and tend you."

He did not heed her words, or the touch of her hand upon his sleeve as he passed by her. He hurried from the house—bareheaded and wild of aspect. He had a dull thought of the moon now clear from the clouds, and of its white light on the town; and of his hurrying on down the street; and of form and sound, of tavern door open, of voices, laughter, and disorder; of the ordered pacing of the sentries before Government House, and of bright lamp-light, and movement, and scarlet, and glittering, clanking steel at the Guard-house. Of hurrying on still, from the heart of the town

to the hill, and of light now to his way, and of darkness now through the massing against the moon of the clouds blown by the sea wind. Warwick Street was in darkness.

But when he came to the gateway of Rachel Welland's house, the cloud was broken from the moon's face, and he saw that the gate was still ajar. He did not ring the bell, and he entered the garden. The house rose white and shuttered. No lights showed from the windows. The door and the french windows of the parlour were fast shut.

He judged the hour now to be eleven o'clock. He would have knocked at the door, but, hearing light footsteps on the pathway, he turned, and with relief he saw his Mother coming from the shadow of the pine-trees. Momentarily he saw her mystical and wan, ere the moon was hidden. He stretched out his hands to her outstretched hands. He kissed her lips. He was conscious of her trembling, and of the joyous note in her greeting to him:

"David, dear, I've waited so long! I thought you were not coming. I've been so much afraid."

She clung to him. He put his arms about her. He muttered: "Is this house shut against you?"

"No, not shut against me—yet! David, why do you ask?"

"Because I came here early—after Henry Cleeve had gone. You did not heed me,

though I stood near to you, when she said——”

She uttered a gasping cry: “David, I didn’t dream . . . Your hearing! David, it isn’t true!”

“Wait! . . . Don’t cry . . . don’t tremble so! I can’t endure it!”

“To think that I——”

“To have you weeping so, trembling so! Dear, has she turned you from her doors?”

“After to-night I’ll not be here.”

“Where then?”

“I don’t know. I can’t think. I’ll find some quiet inn or lodging-house to-morrow when it’s light. I’d have gone from this house to-night, only I feared you’d come here, and we might not meet again.”

“What do you mean? You’re not going away?”

“Yes, I’m going away, David.”

“Whither?”

“I’m going away . . . only going away! . . .”

“I tell you, not, I’ll not endure it. You’ll not leave Hobart Town. I’ll hold you here.”

“I can’t stay here, David!”

“You can, and will! In spite of Henry Cleeve—in spite of herself—Miss Welland—all she said! In spite of yourself! . . . I shall not give you up. I shall not let you go!”

She whispered faintly: “There’s a window open, David. See there, a light above us from her room. She’s listening to us. Come away!”

“To find a lodging for you?”

"No. Not yet. This way, David. There's a bench under the pine-trees. We can sit there, and talk a little longer."

She drew him from the shadow of the house to the deeper shadow of the pine-trees. He saw the glitter of the fluttering candle-light in the high, open window, and he discerned the black-robed form of Rachel Welland, and her pale features against the moonlight fading with the clouds. He had a faint sense of the sweetness of the pines, and of their sighing to the sea winds. His Mother halted by the rustic bench, sat down, and drew him down beside her; in all the interplay of light and darkness, from encroaching cloud and from the waving of the pine boughs, her face and form, white—clouding gown, and gleam of crystals, seemed visible to him, though he envisaged chiefly from the impress on his mind of her in beauty and in sorrow. The sighing of the pine-trees to him merged with her sighing. The gusts of wind moaned with her moaning. Now, from his love of her, and reverence of her, and sorrow for her sorrows, he was glad that he could not see the cruel play of emotion on the beloved face, the quivering lips, or the falling of her tears.

"David, you heard her speak of Henry Cleeve, and me, and you?"

"Yes, I heard!"

"All, David?"

"Yes . . . Who I am! . . ."

"David, it isn't true! You mustn't dream it's true! You mustn't say it to me."

"I have not said it."

"But you think it, David?"

"To-night! I can't think clearly. My mind's all blotted, like the night with clouds."

"David, you don't dream—you don't believe this of me?"

"No! Loving you, and hating Henry Cleeve. No! To-night . . . seeing him . . . hearing him——"

"Telling you it was true? But it isn't true! It isn't true!"

"Not saying it was true! Not daring to say it!"

"But you asked him—you could bring yourself to ask him—dreaming——"

"Yes, I asked him."

"Dreaming that it might be!"

She uttered a moaning cry. Her fingers had twined and trembled on his neck and his left hand. Now her head drooped, and her hands were clasped stiffly at her knees. She whispered—so that scarcely her voice was audible to him through the whispering of pine boughs:

"How should I dream that you should love and trust me, and tolerate no word of shame or scorn against me? How should I hope—having lost you to them long ago?"

He muttered: "I have thought and dreamed of you, believing you were dead, and I have tried to picture you, as in life you must have

been. I have told myself that I remembered you—clearly, not dimly; and I have thought of you—I have believed you—only as beautiful, and dear, and good. I have loved you till your coming back to me, challenging my thought of you, my memory of you, my dream of you!”

“I would I had not come again to Hobart Town! I would I might have lived so in your thoughts and dreams! I would you had not known me as I am!”

He did not heed her sighing, and he muttered on: “Yesterday, when I knew you lived, and I saw you, dearer and more precious and more beautiful than ever thought or memory or dream, I was afraid, for very happiness, and for the thought of waking—and knowing all a vision—all unreal to me, and dream-like, vanishing! . . . I can’t think now—I can’t be sure—that I am waking, and sitting with you in this garden here, and listening to your telling me . . . it isn’t true . . . all that the woman said against you. I can’t determine which are dreams, and which are thoughts. This evening, when I came into the garden, and heard her, and when I walked into the darkness, and when I went to Henry Cleeve, and, telling him that I did not believe, yet asked him—to say it was not true—and hating him so much—and loving you, I knew that it couldn’t be true . . . don’t you—can’t you understand my mind? . . . It’s in a fever, and my thoughts are

spinning, like the dust, or dead leaves on the wind!"

"Oh, let me answer that it isn't true!"

"I would not ask. I would not have you answer. Only . . . I dream . . . and I'm afraid. Often in dreams I am afraid. Waking, I am afraid. Remembering dreams of someone . . . you, my Mother . . . beautiful as you are to me now, sitting by me here! Dreaming, but waking lonely—knowing my Mother dead, as now I fear to wake and find——"

"That I am dead to you," she whispered; "must be dead to you—forgotten—not forgiven?"

"No! Had you been beside me long ago, and I'd awakened from a dream, but I had heard your voice, assuring me——"

She murmured: "Saying: 'Sleep again! Sleep again—and dream!' . . ."

"Saying: 'It's I, your Mother, as you dreamed!'"

She did not speak. He heard the moaning of the wind in the pine boughs. He saw the moonlight play upon her face, and the anguish, yet the mockery of her lips. The crystals were like tears.

CHAPTER XVI

DIARY OF MR. HENRY CLEEVE

MIDNIGHT, with the striking and the tinkling of the clocks—with Miss Serena keeping vigil in her room, and all the servants of the house at rest; and the lamp burning dimly in the hall still, and the candles in Cleeve's study burning low.

From the leaping of a candle-flame sinking in wax, lights and shadows were cast against the wall, and on the pallid cheek of Henry Cleeve, at his desk now, not busied with his papers, but, by his aspect, rapt in thoughts as fitful in their lights and shadows.

The striking and the tinkling of the clocks through the silence of the house stirred Cleeve from a lethargy of mind and immobility attributable to no weariness from the lateness of the hour, or from the tax on mind and body of the darting agony through heart and nerves, but to exhaustion, from the torment of his thoughts and memories quickened by the meeting with Isabel Cleeve, and that calamitous sense of loss and failure. The son of Isabel Cleeve eluded him—his heart, affections, and ambitions, as for his son, even as the mother had eluded him so many years ago.

With this awakening of his mind through

sound, and with the liberation of emotions, he had the satiric thought of a resemblance in this mental torment to the physical torment—yet of the imperfection of his simile—agony of the body passed swiftly measured by this torture of mind and conscience.

Emotion had so far disordered practice and routine that his habit of recording in his diary, night after night, before he left his study, the events of the day, had been forgotten. Yet, when despairing of David's return that night, and thinking to seek sleep, he rose from his chair by the desk, his body so far complied with custom that when he had put out the lights of all save the one candle, and would have dragged himself wearily to his room, he moved unconsciously to the safe set in the wall between two shelves of books, opened it, and took out the topmost volume of his diary. With it in his hand he stood peering down at the pile of leather-bound and gilt-lettered volumes, with the thought that he had recorded down the years only such thoughts, emotions, and fancies as he would have confided to his wife or son, had fate made Isabel his wife.

The diary held only the outward show and semblance of Henry Cleeve—no secret thoughts, no height of passion or dark depth of motives or of morals. Knowing himself, he was incapable of frankness even to himself in personal record, which none should read in his lifetime—and, maybe, none care to read, trac-

ing the story of Henry Cleeve, merchant and Colonist, as he would have his little world believe him, not as he was.

His lips curled—he must act his part, even to himself. Self and sins, as over-weening pride, and his humiliation at defeat by life, by loneliness, by Isabel Cleeve—by David now, were secrets, not to be divulged, not to be written down.

He moved back to his desk, and set the candle so that its light would flicker on the paper. He sat down, opened the diary, dipped his pen in ink, and wrote :

I waited on Isabel, my brother's widow, at the house of Rachel Welland to-day. I entreated her to leave Hobart Town, thus breaking off her association with David. Such association, I made clear to her, must mean my disinheriting him. I would brook no defiance from her, or from the boy.

I found her unchanged, in beauty, as in mind or spirit. Though we had not met for so many years, my memory of her is vivid and poignant.

David, defying me, must have followed me to Rachel Welland's house, and have arrived shortly after my departure from it. He overheard a quarrel between Isabel and Rachel, and Rachel's charge against his Mother, relating to her alienation from, and repudiation and dismissal by, Charles,

and the cause. David has asked me this night whether in truth, he is my son. I have denied this, though my heart yearns for him. Had I not heeded Isabel, the hurt to her, and that obligation of a gentleman, I might have been led to tell him——

He heard the dull sound of knocking at the house door. His thought was diverted instantly from the diary by his sense of relief—this must be David, come home to him!

He closed the diary instantly, but left it lying on the desk. He hurried to the door and opened it, and admitted David. David was haggard with weariness, and when he entered the hall he did not seem to heed Cleeve's greeting: "David, my dear boy!" or his outstretched hand in welcome to him, or the elation and affection of his look; but limped past him, not replying to his appeal.

"Don't go to your room without food and wine! Your aunt ordered supper to be set in the dining-room for you, David!"

David dragged his exhausted body up the stairs. Henry Cleeve turned the key and shot the bolt of the house door. All safe. All secure . . . and the boy at least come home! David . . . his son . . . David!

He did not return to the study to set away the diary. He went to his room, for now he might hope to sleep.

CHAPTER XVII

EIGHT O'CLOCK

DAVID, on leaving the house next morning, walked not to the Cleeve Stores, but to Rachel Welland's house.

Ere parting from his Mother he had compelled the promise from her that she would be ready by eight o'clock to accompany him in quest of a suitable lodging—she could accept no continuance of hospitality from Miss Welland. She would not leave Hobart Town immediately.

Walking to the hill he reviewed his plan. His Mother confessed her poverty. He had saved little from his earnings at the Cleeve Stores. Even if Mr. Cleeve did not fulfil his threat of dismissal for defiance of him, David felt that he could accept nothing from him. The payments to him he knew munificent and in excess of his value to the house. He must find new employment. His wage would be small, yet surely would suffice to support his Mother and himself.

Spirit of youth, irresponsible and triumphant—in prospect—over a sea of troubles, defeated doubts and fears. His love for his Mother was stronger than his shame and terror at the

accusation levelled against her by Rachel Welland.

He would put from his mind the thought and the fear of the thought. He would love and revere his Mother. He would tolerate no slight to her, or sneer, or slander against her!

The sun burnt high in heaven. The Welland house was harsh and austere in the clear light of the morning. The deep green shadows beneath the trees contrasted with the hard brightness on the flagged path and across the yellowed dryness of the withering lawn. He had thought to find his Mother awaiting him. He wondered at the quiet of the house. The shutters were closed before the upper windows, and the curtains drawn across the windows of the rooms on the ground floor, in protection from the white burning of the November sunlight.

With fear now lest his Mother, not keeping her promise, had left the house, or for pride's sake had gone away through new quarrel with, and insult from, Miss Welland, he knocked loudly at the front door. The knocking echoed dully through the hall, but brought no one to the door in answer.

He knocked again, and more loudly, without response. With terror now he hurried to the kitchen door. It was closed, and, though he beat loudly on it, no one appeared in answer. Despairing then, he returned to the house front, and waited there for a little while, hoping yet

that even at this hour Miss Welland and her servant might not be astir, but, on waking, would come down, and tell him whither his Mother had gone and where he might hope to find her.

With this thought he knocked again, but, failing still to rouse or summon Miss Welland or her maid, he hurried to the gate. He was disturbed to see the fresh tracks—of hoofs and wheels—on the gravel of the carriage drive—with the thought that his Mother might have been driven in the Welland carriage from the house down to the waterside, if, in spite of her promise to him, she thought to leave Hobart Town that morning. Why, the *Euphemia* had been due to sail from Hobart Town at dawn!

At this fear he ran through the gateway, thinking to hasten down to the waterside and try to intercept her, though this hot wind had surely borne the ship far down the river. As he reached the roadway he met Rachel Welland returning with her maid from market. The servant carried a laden wicker-basket. Miss Welland, in the blackness of her dress, bonnet, veil and gloves, was in sombre contrast with the light and colour of the morning.

At his clumsy bow, and muttered question: "Has Mrs. Cleeve left your house?" she halted, and waited till the maidservant had passed into the garden.

She said coolly then: "Yes! This morning—several hours ago."

He cried out hoarsely: "Whither? Can you tell me? Do you know?"

She raised the dark veil from her white face. Her gaze was cold and direct. Her voice suggested indifference: "No! I cannot tell you."

"But surely——!"

"I say I cannot tell you!"

"Has she taken away her boxes—everything—from your house?"

"She drove away with them in my carriage."

"Not saying whither she was going?"

"She may have told my coachman of her plans. I cannot say, I am sure. I did not question her. Indeed, I did not see her before her departure."

"Where is your coachman? At the house?"

"He has gone on an errand for me—to the town."

"Your maid, then——?"

She said with an air of languor, and indifference insufferable to him in his distress and fear: "I shall go into the house and ask her if you wish."

"Yes, for heaven's sake!"

"Wait, please!"

She entered the garden, stepping slowly. In his unendurable impatience he walked after her to the front door. She did not pause or invite him to enter the house. He waited in the hot sunlight.

She returned presently. She said: "My maid tells me that Mrs. Cleeve asked to be driven

down to the old wharf—so my coachman said—and that she took a boat there to the *Ceylon*, which was on the point of departure for Sydney. My maid is not quite clear on this.”

At his look of consternation, his gasp and gesture, her aspect of indifference changed in no way. Her voice was slow and drawling still:

“She had spoken to me of her purpose to sail to Sydney, thinking to find a place as governess, or companion, in a family returning to England.”

He turned and fled from the garden. Like a madman he ran down Warwick Street to Campbell Street, making for the waterside. Hoping that the departure of the ship had been delayed—that he might intercept her, beg her, compel her to stay, not go—not leave him lonely, as long since.

Hoping against hope. The rising wind, which should bear the *Ceylon* swiftly and far down the river, whirled the white dust about him.

CHAPTER XVIII

WITHOUT PRECEDENT

MR. HENRY CLEEVE arrived at the Stores at nine o'clock. While walking down Macquarie street, spruce, debonair, he might have seemed to friends and acquaintances, by the cordiality, courtesy, or condescension of his greetings, to be in normal mood and health. Expression and gait did not suggest all his alertness, his enjoyment and sense of importance of life, the Cleeve Stores, and himself; but weariness and dejection might have seemed justified by the heat of the late spring morning, the dry, dust-burdened wind, and the weight of business of Cleeve & Cleeve through the consignments by the *Euphemia* and *Aurelia*. Mr. Cleeve, going to his office, was the Mr. Cleeve of any morning of the week in Hobart Town, but——

Mr. Cleeve, haggard of look, scowling of brow, tormented of eyes and lips—and passing through the counting-house without glance at, or word of greeting to, his clerks, or recognition of the obsequious Mr. Allen, who was waiting at his door in readiness, with a subservient smile and bow—and stifling an oath for the affrighted office-boy's not throwing open deftly

the green baize-covered door before him, but letting it slip back, so that Mr. Cleeve must swing it open for himself, with all the show of violent ill-temper, was Mr. Cleeve in a black mood without precedent at the Stores of Cleeve & Cleeve.

David, as secretary to Mr. Cleeve, should have been in the office, and should have risen from his chair at the desk by the window and bowed. The letters on Mr. Cleeve's desk should have been opened in readiness for his reading and decision. David was not in the room, and the letters had not been opened.

Struggling for, and attaining, control of jangling and disordered nerves, Cleeve hastened to bathe his brows with cold water, to allay his fever, and to compose his features from dark and sullen expression to a normal suavity, and to change his broadcloth coat for his silken jacket. Haggard, burning of eyes, yet with an air of mastery of himself and his dependants, he sat down at his desk and summoned Mr. Joseph Allen to his room.

"Good morning, Allen."

"Good morning, Mr. Cleeve, sir!" Mr. Allen's voice and expression were soft, sympathetic, and apprehensive. "I trust that you are well, sir."

"Thank you. Why not?" Cleeve's tone was caustic.

"You seem to me a little paler than I care to see you."

"Indeed. I spent a restless night—that's all.

My head inclines to ache. Is David in the Stores?"

"I have not seen him this morning, I regret to say, sir."

Cleeve's look and tone were impassive. "Send him to me so soon as he comes in. Pray leave your papers. I'll go through them and your notes without conference this morning. Thank you; that is all."

Alone, Cleeve enforced the concentration of his mind on the correspondence and reports before him. The effort tried him, with the sense of mental and physical overstrain, yet concentration enabled him with swiftness and decision to survey and determine nature of policy and replies.

He affected not to hear the striking of the half-hour, or the striking of the hour of ten, without the appearance of, or word concerning, David. Not till he had completed his task, and was in readiness for his secretary, did he allow the reversion of his mind to David, or the encroachment of fear. Even then his respite from the affairs of Cleeve & Cleeve to this affair of paramount importance to himself was brief. He wrote swiftly, in his fine and steady penmanship, the replies to the more important or urgent of his letters.

By noon he had written his letters, and had discussed with Mr. Allen matters on which that morning the decision of Mr. Cleeve was exclusive and conclusive. Free then from corres-

pondence, direction of the Stores, and happily or unhappily without appointment or interview to accord to merchant, colonist, client, agent, or servant of Cleeve & Cleeve, he sat at his desk with his head bowed, his eyes sombre with the darkness of his thoughts and fears, and his mind incapable of decision—on the direction of quest for David; this implied admission to Allen of his own defeat by Mrs. Cleeve and her son. He imagined grimly to himself Allen's gleeful conjecture, and the wonder and the whispered gossip among the clerks, on David's failure that morning to attend his duties as secretary to the head of the House.

He must not sit idle there! He must seek the boy. He would find him, surely, with his Mother. She had triumphed over Cleeve. She had won David from his allegiance to him. David and she would prove defiant, yet——

He would go seek them at Rachel Welland's house—they would be there! . . . No! . . . Isabel would have left the Welland house—how should she have endured to stay as guest with Rachel after the quarrel and the insult? But seek them where else? Rachel Welland might know, and tell him whither they had gone? Though an enemy of his, not forgetting or forgiving?

Reflection ended, with the tapping scarcely audible to him, and with the opening of the door without his summons. His stare of anger at such an intrusion passed instantly for his

look of joy and wonder at David, coming into the room—dusty, dishevelled, and sweating; his aspect wild, and to Cleeve's quick and distressful thought, his look showing hate for him.

Cleeve's greeting died on his lips. His gaze was coldly direct and challenging, and his head high and arrogant.

He asked with harshness, and the menace of tone which he would have used to any unruly or undisciplined clerk of his: "What is the meaning of this, pray? How dare you present yourself to me at such an hour of the day and in such a state of slovenliness? And with such insolence?" he cried out, striking his hand upon his desk at the boy's unwavering glare of hatred and accusation.

"When you told me last night that you had ordered my Mother to go from Hobart Town, and me, you did not tell me all! You did not dare to tell me all——!"

At David's words, harsh, broken, scarcely compelled from the violence of his passion, Cleeve started. Wonder showed momentarily in his cold, clear eyes and the uplifting of his brows: "I do not understand you."

"You did not dare to tell me that you had planned everything for her going away—at once—so that she could not listen to me—heed me—and be persuaded by me, that she need not fear you—you could not hurt her or me, in spite of all your threats against us! So that she would not dare to stay with me!"

"I say I do not understand you, David! Your Mother has gone from Hobart Town—is that your meaning?"

"You know it!"

"You tell me of it, David. Else, how should I know it?"

"Do you expect me to believe that?"

"I expect—nay, I demand—that you show to me respect as head of your family, and of the house in which you are employed!" Cleeve's tone was steel. "Show such respect, or go from my room!"

His pride and dignity were outraged by, yet his mind appraised and approved, the challenge and the force and fire of the boy's eyes, the hard strength of the pale young face, and the voice as harsh and unshaken as his own:

"I'll not go from your room—your house—till you answer me!"

"David, I have only to touch the bell to order you to be thrown into the street. I have the power—I shall not exercise it unless you compel me; but I shall listen to you patiently and reply to your questions if you control yourself and let me understand what has happened. . . . Come. . . . Your Mother has left Hobart Town—I think this in your interest as my own—you know this! You have learnt that she is gone—I learn it only now. I ask you when and whither?"

"By the *Ceylon*, this morning—you know it—for Sydney, thinking to go on to England!"

Cleeve betrayed no trace of satisfaction in his expression. His voice was softer and kindlier: "I did not plan this, David! I did not guess or hope for it."

"Or hope!"

"David, I beg you to control yourself. I have the satisfaction from her departure, that she has recognized the impossibility of association with you or restoration to her place among us. I deplore the reasons, David!"

"Deplore! . . . Having driven her from me . . . as long ago from me . . . now, all my life, from me! . . . But I shall follow! I'll not stay here! I'll follow by the next ship for Sydney—England—anywhere in the world!"

Cleeve's look and voice hardened: "David, I have authority over you—I am your guardian. I shall not hesitate to protect you, even against yourself. I have but to approach His Excellency, and lay your case before him, and not a master will dare to take you aboard his ship, or to land or liberate you in Sydney, or in any English port—as a stowaway. I have authority, I say, over you, as over any servant assigned to me, and I'll not fail or falter. Understand!"

He struck his hand again upon the desk. His cold, compelling eyes battled for mastery with eyes of passion and despair. He had a satisfaction in the conflict of will with will, and of his will triumphant—with the son as not with

the mother all the years before. Pitilessly he watched the colour slowly stain the whiteness of young David's face, his lips quiver, and his eyes swim.

David slid suddenly to the chair beside the desk, and buried his face in his hands. His sobs came dry and choking.

Cleeve did not speak for a little while. Slowly his right hand stretched out and touched the boy's shoulder. He had a sense of infinite pity and tenderness, and yet of over-weening joy in triumph.

"David, you asked me if you were my son. . . . I answer . . . only . . . I could not love my son more than I love you, David. I could not long to battle more for my son—accomplish and attain more—protect and mould more . . . my son. . . . My son, David!"

The tapping on the door should mean the announcement of a visitor—fellow-merchant, sea captain, or profitable client. Cleeve's voice was sharp and authoritative:

"Pray compose yourself, David! Go, wash yourself and brush the dust from your shoes. And go to your desk. Such conduct, my dear fellow, is without precedent in the House—entirely without precedent!"

He rose, walked to the door, and drew it slightly open.

"Yes, Mr. Allen? What is it? Yes, I shall be free to see Mr. Walham almost immediately."

CHAPTER XIX

JANUARY EVENING

DAVID, before his dressing-glass, found no need of candlelight to assure himself that his linen was spotless and not crumpled, his black coat without dust, and his hair smooth with macassar oil.

The sun was dying beyond the crown of cloud set by the sea wind on Mt. Wellington. Light gilded the room with an unreal and passing splendour. Happily the breeze had risen early from the sea in the January day; the dining-room would be cool, and even the parlour, if Aunt Susannah Learoyd, insisting on fresh air, prevailed, as ever, over Aunt Serena's fear of chills and draughts. Starched linen and broadcloth were practicable for the Cleeve men at dinner.

David satisfied himself of the nicety of his attire, as reflected in the mirror, with no deeper personal interest or pleasure than were offered in prospect by a Cleeve dinner-party. From blue of cloth and starched whiteness of linen, his good looks were emphasized; his thin features bronzed by the summer sun and the sea air; and through emotional experience and distress finer, more sensitive, and yet suggestive

of a strength of will greater than David's in that conflict with Henry Cleeve for mastery two months before. Cleeve race was more sharply defined by the thinness of his features, as though the aim of Henry Cleeve to mould this Cleeve son to the Cleeves in thought and purpose had been accomplished, and was expressed on the resolute face, the cold eyes, and the satiric lips. The resemblance to Isabel Cleeve was yielding to the Cleeve resemblance. The golden beauty of her hair was not suggested under this perfumed oil, or her lustrous eyes in David's guarded eyes. The Cleeve resemblance inclined rather to Charles, thin-lipped and lifeless, than to Henry.

David glanced at the clock and went down to the parlour. Miss Serena sat stiffly in her high-backed, rosewood chair. Colourless personality defeated lilac colour of her taffeta gown, with amethysts and gold. The windows of the parlour were slightly open, and screened by lace curtains against the intrusion of flies. Miss Serena guarded herself against chill with a shawl suggesting pale cobwebs rather than precious Cashmere, and with lilac silken mittens. She did not offer her withered cheek to his kiss, through no displeasure with him, but for avoidance of creasing her gown in the narrow space of her chair before company arrived.

Miss Serena smiled palely at David's

approach. "You look very nice and neat, my dear."

"Thank you, Aunt Serena," he said, with politeness and lack of interest. He offered no compliment in payment.

"Will you ring the bell, please, David, and tell Acres to close the windows? The evening is chilly, don't you think?"

"I do not feel it so," he said. "I'll close the windows if you wish. There's no need to ring for Acres."

He walked toward the windows and would have closed them. Serena reconsidered. "No, thank you, David. Perhaps Susannah may imagine that the room is close. She is so fanciful!"

"But if you feel cold, Aunt——"

"I do," Serena declared, "but I'll not have the windows closed. After all, Susannah will be our guest, and courtesy dictates that I study even her fancies—does it not, David?"

"As you think, Aunt Serena."

He sat down on the sofa and faced her with an air of boredom. She eyed him fondly.

"I shall miss you sadly, David, and I shall be afraid for all the weeks you are from home."

"A month at most, Aunt."

"Ah! but the dangers, my dear!"

"What dangers?"

"That wild country—if ever you cross the sea in safety and aren't drowned! And the murderous savages!"

He laughed lifelessly. "I think you exaggerate a little, Aunt."

"Pardon me, David!" Miss Serena snapped. "I do not exaggerate!"

"Pardon me, Aunt. I know that you are afraid only on my account. I assure you that you have no need to be so. I shall be quite safe with Mr. Gellibrand and the others."

"I do wish you were not going, David."

"But Uncle Henry wishes me to go."

"Ah, but do you wish to go, David?"

"I wish to go—yes." His tone betrayed his indifference. "At least, I like and admire Mr. Gellibrand."

"Do you?" Miss Serena's tone suggested her own doubt.

"Don't you, Aunt?"

"My dear, I know him to be an estimable gentleman."

"Very well, then, Aunt——"

"Not very well, pardon me, David."

"No?"

"No! I do not approve of Mr. Gellibrand's actions or opinions. If they were held by anyone but Mr. Gellibrand I should describe them as, well, really, David——"

David smiled faintly. "Yes, Aunt?"

"No one of whom I allow myself to approve, David, should be on unfriendly terms with Government House. His Excellency, you must remember, is the representative of dear King William. And I fear that Mr. Gellibrand

is apt to forget that Colonel Arthur does speak for King William, and that it is the duty of us all to obey him—or where are we?”

She was silenced by Henry Cleeve's satiric laughter. He had come into the room unnoticed by her. His glance at David was sardonic. “Where, indeed, my dear Serena?”

“I did not hear you, Henry.”

“I beg your pardon, Serena, for coming in so quietly. I could not deny myself the privilege and pleasure of hearing you define the duty of a colonist to His Majesty, and His Majesty's representative. Personally, I feel that Colonel Arthur's dismissal of Gellibrand was political in motive, and proportionately unjust in principle.”

“Henry!” Miss Serena gasped. “How can you? His Excellency——!”

“Dear Serena,” he said, smiling down at her, “pray let us retain our political opinions without a tiff just as our guests are arriving. And let us concede the right to His Excellency and to Mr. Gellibrand to retain theirs.”

He eyed his reflection in the chimney-glass. To David, watching him, he seemed to find cause for disquiet in his reflection—the lines about his mouth deepened; his eyes darkened; a shadow passed across his handsome face. In truth he appeared livid in the light of the evening. The touches of colour in his cheeks were not of a healthy hue, but were mottled. His lips were bloodless.

Yet at the sound of carriage wheels he turned swiftly, with a smiling show of good humour and heartiness.

"The first of our guests, Serena! James and Susannah! Even the sound of their carriage expresses them. Oh, and the Allens follow!"—at the sound of wheels which rattled.

"David, have you observed how all our possessions express ourselves?"

"Certainly, sir. Cleeve & Cleeve!" David followed Mr. Cleeve and Miss Serena to the hall to welcome their guests.

Aunt Susannah, tall as Henry, handsome, opulent, and high of colour—her taffeta gown and jewels harmonizing at least with the sunset—on entering the Cleeve parlour, glanced significantly at the windows ere she sat down on the sofa and unfolded her silken fan.

"Open the windows wider, David, my dear, please. The heat is really intense in this room."

Serena's sharp glance at David as he obeyed betrayed the thought which, as gentlewoman and hostess, she might not utter. Guests assembling in the parlour—with greetings, compliments, handshakes, bows and curtsies, creaking of shoes, rustling of satins and flutterings of muslins—formed the full family of Cleeves residing in Hobart Town—the resplendent Susannah; brown and sardonic James, her husband, formerly of the Honourable East India Company's Service; Amelia Allen, tall, angular, reflecting the fashions of

the past London season, and as rigid as her interpretation of the proprieties and her nature dictated; her husband, Joseph, not subservient now even to Mr. Cleeve, and ingratiating even to David—his teeth white and prominent as the frill of his shirt; their son Richard, sleek in black and white, and with his light green eyes, suggesting a slim and trim young cat, and wearing an air of disavowing his parents to society; his sister Caroline, named loyally yet unpropitiously before a Royal indiscretion, already known, had been noised abroad—with her white muslin, her flaxen ringlets, and turquoise earrings, and seeming dutifully as colourless as her Mamma.

And, to David, alone of interest—dawning interest—among the Cleeves—Anne!

She was tall as the Cleeves, and yet was no Cleeve, though now with them by right of the guardianship and the affections of James and Susannah, who were childless. She owned the good looks and the elegance desired by Amelia Allen, as a dutiful Mamma, for her own daughter Caroline. Her calm, appraising eyes seemed violet of hue in the subdued light of the room, and her lips like a dark rose, and the muslin of her dress white as roses. The knot of Indian red ribbons at her shoulder and the red coral drops of her earrings, expressed Susannah and her love of colour—and a possible concession from Anne. She was seated now with Caroline, and seemed to heed

her chatter and giggling, and to be amused; smiling and watching reflectively Mr. Cleeve, courtly, hospitable and dominant—though not dominating the company of Cleeves, and watching Miss Serena, fluttering and seeming politely to heed compliments, questions, trivialities and inanities addressed to her or to the company, yet abstracted—from the division of her thoughts in concern for the smooth service of dinner, and in the challenge of her sister Susannah. Susannah had dared to order David to open the windows more widely, and to admit draughts perilous to Miss Serena.

Aunt Susannah's fan waved and fluttered like the lace curtains in the inflowing breeze. "Well, David, so you'll be travelling north to-morrow?"

"Yes, Aunt Susannah."

"And you're not at all afraid?"

"Afraid of what?"

"Of the sea, of course, and the sea-sickness, which is worse than the sea."

David laughed. "I hadn't thought of that, Aunt."

"Oh, but you will, my dear. Really, I shall never forget my sufferings on the voyages to India and down to New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land. Almost I craved for death, David. I would have prayed if I had dared to pray at all."

"Really, Aunt?"

"And how will you endure the summer heat at Port Phillip, if it really is in New South Wales? You've known only the heat here. That would be nothing to me—if only the windows were properly opened. Pray open them a little wider, David."

Miss Serena's shivering implied not chill, but the mortification of spirit demanded of the gentlewoman. Her misunderstanding of David's purpose in approach to the windows was protective as malicious.

"Thank you, David! How thoughtful of you to close the windows. Yes, this cold draught distresses me, my dear. No, don't trouble, David. Dinner."

CHAPTER XX

MR. CLEEVE AT TABLE

WITH the cloth drawn and the Cleeve men left to their wine—with the shining and colour of mahogany, of many candles, and much silver, of precious glass and fine wine, Mr. Cleeve forgot his sense of disquiet through the reflected imprint on his face from the recurrent agony, growing more protracted, surely, despite Crowther's drugs and rough warnings against excess at office desk or at table.

Excess! Wherein was the tax on mind or body in the affairs of Cleeve & Cleeve? He found delight in direction, in expansion of trade, in development of markets, as House and Colony increased, and in the revenues gilding the House of Cleeve as the sun through these summer days gilded Hobart Town. And he found delight in this ripe port glorifying the glass in his jewelled hand.

"My dear Allen, pray do not stint the port. . . . Pardon me, Learoyd. You were telling me——?"

Seeming to listen with absorption and interest, he scarcely heeded Learoyd's story. Raising his glass with a smile and bow to guest or guest, he cared for no guest. Though

ting in their approval of his taste in wine and tobacco, sipping his wine, and smoking on though his doctor had set his ban on tobacco—this segar—the smoke curling lazily. All the while watching David steadily—down the table—vivid to him through a blur of lights and colours and the soft smoke. . . .

The boy was growing up true Cleeve—in features and in mind. The resemblance—a direct and tormenting resemblance—to Isabel fading, like the influence on his mind from his brief return to his life. White face, clear firm lips, sleek darkness surely of hair, that maddening, glinting gold, suggesting gleaming ringlets beneath a Leghorn bonnet and ribbons of cerulean blue; sway and flutter of muslin; sway and flutter of muslin; mockery of laughter and of bright eyes, and the roses of Isabel's lips in a garden of summer long ago.

No laughter in the lad's eyes now, coldly declining the company. No laughter on his face but a pale, satiric smile!

Why, yes, my dear fellow, I think David quite adequate in this opportunity of inspecting the Association's lands for himself under the brand's charge! I know of no Colonist whom I hold in higher esteem. . . . You'll excuse me of tactlessness, Learoyd, knowing your esteem of you. . . . Gellibrand and his guests command my best wishes for their

retention of the lands—not that I see the likelihood of the Home Government's sanctions!"

"Gellibrand declares the legality of the deeds!" Learoyd said. "The Colony knows no finer lawyer."

"I grant you," Cleeve assented. "I have the same confidence in his law as in his probity, but——"

Allen, flushed of face and thick of speech, leaned forward. "Batman's no Penn!" he ventured, with an essay of wit. "The pen was Gellibrand's!"

"Capital, no doubt," Cleeve approved, smiling, "but forgive my dullness, I don't follow you."

"Nor I, Allen," Learoyd said, smiling.

Allen's colour grew deeper. "The pen that drew up the deeds of conveyance and wrote the report to His Excellency was Gellibrand's. Batman's not a lawyer. Batman's not a scholar! Batman's not a Penn!"

"Capital indeed!" Cleeve grinned. "You stint the port still, Allen . . . Dick, your glass is empty. David, you neglect your duties to our guests, sir."

Young Richard Allen showed no signs of intoxication. He was drinking with a caution and an air of appreciation of Cleeve's cellar, calculated to appeal to Mr. Cleeve. He ignored David.

"But, Cleeve, with the Association about to be dispossessed—on the proof of Bourke's

proclamation—and Port Phillip at best no more than a sheep-walk and the settlement a village of squatters and trespassers,” Learoyd said, “I fail to grasp your interest.”

“My interest is definite, Learoyd!”

“And far-seeing!” Allen approved Cleeve, nodding sagely.

“Happy to have your support, Allen,” Cleeve said. “Whatever the value of the Association’s title—and a treaty with Blacks suggests to me a farce in the playhouse, I am assured of the value of the territory. The Island provides no pastures comparable with the Port Phillip pastures. The Island’s sheep are being moved by shiploads from the Tamas. The Island’s trade will follow. I see the future of our export trade to be in wool!”

Allen raised his glass and bowed with an air of adulation.

“Thank you, Allen. Your health, sir!” Cleeve touched his lips with his glass. “Dispossession of the Association does not mean the death blow to the Port Phillip Settlement. As I understand it, the movement foreshadows a new Colony—in a sense, a new Colony, even if under the direct government from Sydney, as Van Diemen’s Land to our day. I should accept without question the assurances to me from the Association of the extent and quality of the Port Phillip pastures. But it is my practice to be guided by my own observation, or the report of my own agents—reliable

agents. David's visit to Port Phillip has this object. I'm gaining confidence in his judgment. His report will determine the nature of my interest in Port Phillip. . . . Learoyd, your glass, sir. Allen!"

He played attentive host. He talked glibly, with a satiric pretence of profundity. He cared for his company not at all. Only for David—he was watchful of him always.

David's eyes and lips seemed to signal response to Cleeve's eyes and lips, as though heart and mind were attuned to Cleeve's heart and mind. Though thought and fancy were led not by the talk of Port Phillip or the expedition starting on the morrow, but by the memory, the yearning, the sense of cruel disappointment, heartbreak, despair——

Not Henry Cleeve's face, through the haze of smoke gilded by the light of many candles. Not his voice dominant over a mumble of voices. But a fair face, pale, and visionary through shadows. A voice sighing to the sighing of pine trees, and the gleaming of moonlight on the beautiful sorrowful face, and the crystals like tears!

He had received no letter from his Mother all these months in reply to his letters through the office of the agents for the *Ceylon*.

He was compelled to realities by Cleeve's uprising: "Learoyd, Allen, Dick, I give you—David, a prosperous journey to Port Phillip, and a safe return!"

CHAPTER XXI

ANNE

IT SUSANNAH had triumphed over Aunt Serena—the windows were open on a summer night, and the parlour was cooled by the weakening sea breeze.

Learoyd, alone on the sofa with her feet outstretched, her fan at rest, her scent bottle and lace handkerchief in her plump, white hand, in rich, ripe colours of complexion and dress, in air of opulence and good humour, was the centre and the source of colour and life in Miss Serena's parlour, like the summer sun reclining comfortably in the western sky.

Allen had taken possession of the room. Her capable fingers emphasized the accompaniment to her daughter's songs. Caroline's voice had been trained unduly to value. Her singing of Mamma's selection

Moore's "Melodies" conveyed at least a sense of her fulfilment of duty to Mamma—Caroline obeyed Mamma in singing—he shared the wish of the company that she should not sing, and the opinion of the company that she had no voice—with just such

politeness and insincerity as Aunt Serena and Aunt Susannah showed when a song was foreshadowed or a song had ended.

Anne, at least, was sincere in silence. She had made no request for one of Caroline's songs, and she paid no compliment.

David, on returning with Mr. Cleeve and his guests to the parlour, as Mrs. Allen and Caroline were silent for a little while, took the chair beside Anne's in the shadow of the curtains. Aunt Susannah's eyes beamed approval. Her smile and signal to Dick, whom she detested, to seat himself beside her, were tactical—as Aunt Serena's polite attention to Allen, and Cleeve's and Learoyd's detachment of Amelia and her daughter from the pianoforte, the likelihood of other songs and accompaniments, or intrusion on Anne and David. Conversation sounded protectively about the two.

"Anne, you've not spoken to me this evening!"

"But, David, you have scarcely noticed me! How should I have spoken to you? Called to you across the parlour? Or insisted that you should take me in to dinner—and not allow Richard to do so, whatever Miss Cleeve might say?"

Her voice was slow and sweet; and her smile was as faint as his own.

"But you knew that I was longing to talk with you, Anne?"

"I'm afraid I did not think of it at all."

"Is that true, Anne?"

She laughed frankly: "No, it isn't true, David! But Miss Cleeve would think it unmaidenly of me to tell you that it's not true! . . . Is Mr. Cleeve ill, David?"

"He hasn't said so."

"He wouldn't say so! But he looks strange—doesn't he? That whiteness, and that odd colour in his cheeks!"

He nodded. "Yes—I noticed—earlier in the evening."

Her question was whispered: "Are you quarrelling with him still, David?"

"Who told you we quarrelled?"

"All the Cleeves know. So I know!"

"No, we're not quarrelling—now!"

She did not glance at him. Her hands drooped, white and motionless, at the arms of her chair. Her voice was slow and soft still: "So you have let him conquer you, David?"

He looked sharply at her. His expression was impassive as hers. "How—conquer me?"

"Your Mother, David!"

"Who spoke to you of my Mother?"

"All the Cleeves!"

"Not daring to say anything against her!"

She did not reply to his bitter question. She said slowly: "They were afraid of her when she returned—and of you!"

"Knowing that I must love her!"

"Yes, knowing that!"

"Anne, you seem sympathetic—not like them! She's so lovely—you can't think of such loveliness! She's so lovely, and gracious, and kind!"

"I know this, David, from their fear."

"Anne, if I'd known—dreamed that you could think—speak like this!"

"Hush! Don't speak so loudly! They're watching and listening. Oh, David, I am unmaidenly and ill-bred—to speak like this of the Cleeves in Mr. Cleeve's house!" Her cheeks were touched delicately with colour, and her lips were smiling.

"Anne, Uncle Henry did not conquer me! My Mother left me, after saying that she would stay with me. I do not know why she left me—secretly—after saying she would stay. Except for the thought that she might hurt me with Uncle Henry!"

"Is she in Sydney still, or has she sailed for England?"

"I don't know. She has not written to me, or replied to any of my letters. Anne, to think that you didn't believe ill of her—all the cruel things they said of her!"

"Knowing the Cleeves, David. Pitying her—a girl—in their hands—long ago!"

"Are they unkind to you?"

"No! They're not unkind. Only, David, think—in another year, like you, I shall be free! David, Miss Cleeve is beckoning to you. See!"

"Yes—to close the windows!"

CHAPTER XXII

ENCAMPMENT

DAVID, waking with a sense of feverish heat and thirst, and of intense weariness of the body, imagined dully that he was lying in his bed at Cleeve's house in Hobart Town. Pain and fever of blistered feet, and of sun-burnt face, and neck and arms, and always that consuming thirst, were no more than evil dreaming—through sickness, or through the stifling night. Surely the windows of the room were open! The sea breeze had not risen—there was no relief of coolness!

The release of the moon from the prison of the darkness was preluded by the ghastly shining of its light on the eastern verge of the abyss of cloud. At this white shining, and this definition of curl and crag of cloud, his mind dispelled imagination and half-dreaming—imperfectly, as the moon dispelled the darkness of the open space of the encampment in the Port Phillip bush. A moon of burnished copper, among clouds like the oily surge and the sluggish movement of indefinite waves, or leaden undulations from a sea of blackness.

The heat of the day persisted through the night. David, though spared the burning of

the sun, knew still no coolness. He could not hope to rest, lying on the sunburnt earth, the shrivelled heaths and the dead grasses. He seemed to parch and smother with this heat. On foot, and leaning against a stunted tree, or seated on a fallen branch, at least he should escape this heat uprising. If any breath of air were stirring, or mercifully the breeze arisen from the south, here on the ground he would not know. The coolness would not touch his brows—his brows were burning; his head was aching; his eyes were sore with the sunlight and the sweat of the day's march from Western Port.

He raised his weary, aching, blistered body from the ground. The scrub crackled from summer dryness, when, dazed and reeling, he clutched the brushwood in his hands to steady him. The moon, though not yet hidden again, was dimmed by cloud. He discerned shape faintly—this open space of scrub shut in by shadows, the recumbent forms of his companions—there Mr. Robertson—there Mr. Gardiner, and Mr. Malcolm, and Mr. Leake, and young Tom Gellibrand—lying without stirring, or tossing uneasily, moaning, sighing; the little pile of knapsack, the water-bottles, the muskets ready to hand. One should have watched against the perils of the Blacks—no guard was set—no fire was burning.

Coming to the open scrub that night—after the first day's march from Western Port for

Port Phillip, the Colonists were exhausted. They lit no fire. They ate no food; only they drank sparingly from the water-bottles ere they lay down, sharing their blankets.

No one watched? In the clear moonlight David discerned Mr. Gellibrand, seated on the low bank above the camp—his chin cupped in his right hand; the light defining now the broad brow—the features ordinarily so vivid, purposeful and dominant, were blurred to David with the moonlight and sickness. Mr. Gellibrand's eyes seemed to peer through moonlight, and against the shadows of cloud and scrub, for that silver glimpse of water which should tell Port Phillip Bay and its shore for guidance in their journey toward the Settlement on the River Yarra Yarra, to the north of the great harbour.

Without thought to approach the leader of the party, intruding on his anxiety, and sickness persistent from the first day ashore at Western Port, David, having sought and found his water-bottle and drunk sparingly for dread of the morrow, crawled feebly to the higher ground, and sat down remote from Mr. Gellibrand. Weariness of body persisted, and pain and fever of sunburn dispelled hope of sleeping again if he lay down. He was conscious for the while, only of suffering, though of no doubt or fear of arrival at the Settlement. The merciless journey through this summer heat would end next day, surely;

they would find the shore of the Bay, and tramp up to the mouth of the river. Succession of disasters on this expedition to Port Phillip would not culminate in tragedy—death in the bush from thirst, or at the hands of the Blacks, the Settlement not reached, the territory of the Port Phillip Association not viewed, even as a Promised Land, from afar!

David's thought was ironic—what would be Aunt Serena's horror—what Uncle Henry's concern—at the mere thought of him on this journey—or there, in the hot half-darkness, camped in the scrub, and the Settlement not reached?

Yet the party, led by Mr. Gellibrand from Van Diemen's Land to Port Phillip, should have reached the mouth of the River easily by the *Norval* within a few days, at most, after departure from the River Tamar. The north-westerly gales had disordered all their plans.

David's memories were vivid still of the gale, the battle of the barque across the Strait, the incessant struggle of all the Colonists to save the sheep. The *Norval* had carried 1,200 of Captain Swanston's sheep for Port Phillip; the vessel was ill-fitted for the transport of stock, and in the gale and the high seas, the greater portion of the hay was lost; the sheep were starving.

David had shared with Captain Swanston's agent Mudie, and the shepherds, and the Colonists, in the effort to save the sheep, by

feeding them with flour and water, but within the week of that battle across Bass Strait 115 had died. By the Sunday the *Norval* was off Point Grant, and bearing up to the west of Cape Schanck. And then Captain Robson Coltish, concerned only with the interests of his owner, not with the interests of the Port Phillip Association, whose charter of the barque to carry Colonists and stock to the new territory, was ending with the voyage, had urged that he could not make Port Phillip without two or three tacks, and if he got through the Heads, he could not spare the two days to reach the River Yarra Yarra. His ship was under demurrage of £10 a day; he must make for Western Port to ship wattle bark for his owner.

Western Port, then—not Port Phillip—for if the wind changed, and the *Norval* battled for two days more, as for the past week, with the gales, the loss of sheep must be complete and calamitous. Water and grass offered on the shores of Western Port, the great harbour to the south of the Settlement; the sheep could be landed at the abandoned settlement of nine years back. Then the sheep could be moved for Port Phillip with comparative ease and safety.

David's thought was sick still for the disaster. The white, burning heat. The shrivelled grass. The search for fresh water. The night-straying of 800 of the sheep landed in safety at Western

Port. His companions and he had searched the shores for miles. Gellibrand's son, Tom, and Captain Coltish had followed the tracks of the lost sheep two miles along the beach, and had found the carcasses of 280 sheep in and about a muddy, salt-water creek. The terror of Mudie's breakdown that night! . . .

And this overland march, with the thought to reach the Settlement easily, by striking the Bay of Port Phillip, and following its shores up to the river, and to send assistance down from the Settlement to Mudie and his shepherds and the remnant of the flock at the abandoned Settlement! . . .

The Western Port Settlement had been formed by Governor Darling of New South Wales under order from the Colonial Office. Governor Darling and the Secretary of State for the Colonies had been misled by the blunder of the overland explorers, Hume and Hovell, in thinking that the magnificence of pastures of the Downs of Iramoo swept down to Western Port, not to Port Phillip Bay. A settlement on Western Port would counter the suspected designs of France on the South Coast of the Continent. But the settlement of English red-coats and convicts had failed, and had been abandoned, though founded on good land, by a sweet stream, and among pastures. There, at the ruined settlement, Mudie and his shepherds might save the few sheep left, and seek for the sheep astray—till help should come

down from the Settlement on the Yarra Yarra.

The Colonists had left the *Norval* the evening before, under Mr. Gellibrand's command, with arms, and knapsacks and water-bottles; they had landed at Sandy Point. This past day they had toiled on over heath, and through low scrub, and through forest. They had halted in the forest. Mr. Gellibrand was sick still from the sun of the first day of landing at Western Point; his endurance had failed in this burning heat of the breezeless, breathless forest. For two hours he had lain in the shade of the trees, while Mr. Leake had searched for, and had found, water, near many native huts. All had tramped then down to the water-holes, and with this merciful plenty had quenched their thirst, and had been enabled to eat. They had raised a tent of blankets, and had rested in its shade against the glare of the sun. With water-bottles filled, they had started off, thinking that the Bay of Port Phillip must be near—they would arrive at the beach that night.

They had tramped on and on, with their spirits buoyed up by their thoughts of the nearness of the beach and safety. On in the moonlight. On under the leaden gloom of the clouds. And with the dimness of their eyes from the sun-glare of the day, and by the disorder of their thoughts from the feverish heat of the night—as of the day, and through their sufferings; and with the shining of the

moonlight striking beyond this scrubby knoll, or that knot of timber, often they had imagined that water gleamed before them—that they had reached the Bay; and, a man crying out “The Bay!” their voices were joined in cheering, and they would speed forward, thinking joyously to bathe their fevered bodies in the sea, and to lie down in the softness of the sands, to rest till dawn. The shore of the Bay would bring them in time to the mouth of the Yarra Yarra, and the Settlement itself was only eight miles upstream.

But the moonlight would fade, and the vision pass like mirages. The night held them—the scrub, and the intense heat still; the heat and the sands. At ten o’clock they had lain down in this open space of scrub to pass the night.

Yet this misery should end to-morrow! The Bay was close to hand! They must find the shore with the dawn, Mr. Gellibrand had said. David, from this night of horror crowning the days of horror, had the thought still that this suffering would pass in a morn of coolness, with the sweet breeze blowing from the south, like the sea breeze rising in Hobart Town and the great Bay, on which he had longed to look, reflecting the blue of heaven, and the whiteness of sunlight. And the sea would allay the fever in his blood; the saltness would sting, yet heal, his blistered, burning feet. He would swim long in the sea, and rest on the sand. Forgetting this night encampment.

His thoughts were dulling with pain; sense of fever would pass into his dreams. He had a thought of his leader as moving slowly past him, and halting nigh him, clear in moonlight; and of his face turned towards him, and of his own confidence in its strength and power, and air of resolution.

Form faded with the clothing of the moon anew, or with the sleep of exhaustion.

CHAPTER XXIII

MR. CLEEVE AND A LETTER

THROUGH days of heat and north-westerly gales fires passed through the forests of the mountain's flanks. They had started on the New Town slope. They had extended into the Huon district—from the showers of burning leaves and shreds of bark. With the veering of the wind the showers fell perilously on Hobart Town. Now, in the sulphurous heat, with the dying of the wind, smoke held the town with the thickness of a London fog.

Mr. Cleeve, walking down Macquarie Street on the way to the Stores, greeted only the friends or the acquaintances whom he met face to face, or with whom he narrowly averted collision. St. David's Church was invisible to him through smoke. The Supreme Court-house and Government House were fantastic and fragmentary to his sight. The harbour, the wharves, and the shipping were hidden to him, and all the activities of Cleeve & Cleeve beyond the walls of the Stores.

He was glad to reach his office and its comparative coolness. The windows were shut fast against the smoke, yet smoke leaked in,

and was acrid and heavy on the air. He hastened to wash his face and hands. He was sweating from the humid heat, and his eyes were smarting and blurred.

In a summer whiteness of drill and duck, cool, though weary from the heat, and from broken sleep, he sat down at his desk and looked at his letters. He read with difficulty. The gloom was such that unless a thunderstorm and the sea breeze cleared the air of smoke and cloud soon he must ring for candles.

He would have broken the seal of a letter, thinking it part of the ordinary correspondence of Cleeve & Cleeve, but seeing that it was addressed to David and in a handwriting of which his memory was still vivid, he hesitated an instant; he stretched out his hand and rang the bell.

Mr. Joseph Allen entered the room with a show of briskness and eagerness for conference. File of papers in hand, he stood by the desk, deferentially awaiting Mr. Cleeve's permission to take his seat. His little eyes were intent on Mr. Cleeve, sitting with the letter before him—and his reply was not brisk to the question:

"Allen, how did this letter come?"

"You mean the letter addressed to David, sir?"

"You know I mean it, Allen!"

"No, sir! A letter among so many is not important to me. I merely chanced to notice it——"

"You did notice it, then?"

"Why, of course, Mr. Cleeve! I have told you."

"And you sent in my letters?"

Mr. Allen was colouring before Mr. Cleeve's cold gaze and questions. "That is my duty, sir!"

"I am aware of it."

"And I fulfilled my duties as usual."

"I see! . . . Is it part of your duties—deliberately to include among my letters a letter to David, knowing that inadvertently I might open it?"

"Why, really, sir, I fear that you——"

"You'd say that I'm mistaken!" Cleeve interrupted, with tone and look of contempt. "I am not mistaken. You guessed from whom this letter comes."

"Naturally, I inferred, from Mrs. Cleeve! It was among the *Swan's* letters from Sydney."

"Ah, and you wished me to open it?"

"Certainly not, Mr. Cleeve—unless you thought proper!"

"I do not think proper!"

"Very good, sir. It was my duty to direct your attention to such a letter, knowing your anxiety——"

"Put this letter on David's desk," Cleeve said, handing the letter to him. "See that his letters—at any time they're addressed to the Stores—are not confused with mine. Necessarily, I do not read his letters! . . . Thank you!" eyeing

with sardonic amusement Allen's hot colour and confusion, as he placed the letter carefully on David's desk, not yet moved to the remodelled outer office. "David should be home within a few days, I judge—though the north-westerlies must have delayed the *Norval* on the passage to Port Phillip. . . . I confess a certain anxiety for him. . . . I have not read my own letters yet, Allen. I shall ring for you presently. Thank you."

He pretended to busy himself instantly with the letters before him. Allen's chagrin and confusion as he went out hastily gave Cleeve satiric pleasure and amusement. The fellow was a contemptible rascal; he thought only to destroy David, and to force himself or his son into a partnership in the boy's place. Yet, in his way he was loyal, and of value to the House, with his grasp of affairs and his quick judgment of markets and his rigid discipline.

David in his day might do as he wished—retain or dismiss Allen and his son. For the while they could continue in the service of the house.

For the while?

Cleeve shuddered with a sense of foreboding. For how many hours—how many days—was his grasp to be on life and the affairs of Cleeve & Cleeve? How long was he to plan and to achieve, and direct the fortunes of the House and its ships and their freights? How long to

play supreme part in the pageantry and splendour of its trading?

He had been free of pain this past week. The drug controlled, regulated, and perhaps repaired. He was not old—till late, his health and vigour had seemed unimpaired. He should be able to look forward to the meridian splendour of his life—the years of his association with the boy in compensation for the waste and loneliness of years.

His brother's wife? . . . This letter, sealed. . . . Her letter to David? . . . His lawyers had ascertained, and informed him, that she was living in Sydney still—a governess to an officer's family. She had not found the means or the employment to enable her to return to England—if she wished to return?

This letter to David—what should it tell? Her approaching departure—her longing for the sight of her son? . . . Her thought even to return to Hobart Town, because of her longing—because of her love of her son! Or calling David away from Hobart Town, and Cleeve & Cleeve—to her? Shattering the work—the hopes, and the ambitions of Henry Cleeve!

This letter, with its grey seal! . . .

David, returning from Port Phillip, and coming into the office and finding it so—his eyes brightening; the colour rising to his cheeks; his fingers trembling in breaking the seal; his absorption in the reading——!

What should he read, that Henry Cleeve's code of honour would not allow him to read—now—and suppress from David?

The rising sea breeze beat against the pane. Lightning was glimmering, and thunder muttering afar. The letter was clear and white on the open desk, as a temptation to Henry Cleeve.

CHAPTER XXIV

PORT PHILLIP

FROM the night of rain the River Yarra Yarra was flooding and discoloured, and obstructed with dead branches, floating or half-sunken, entangled and projecting in masses of drying wood, stationary, or moving sluggishly, not apace with the stream. Scrub and reeds along the banks of the Yarra Yarra were emerging, mud-stained, bent, distorted, and dishevelled, and interlaced with the refuse of bush and river.

With the slow struggle of the boat against the flood waters and the wreckage, the air was harsh and beaten with startled water-fowl. The panic sounded on upstream. The air was weighted with the reek of mud and the decay of vegetation. The sea breeze was weighted with the reek of the piled, dead weed of the beaches.

David, huddling exhausted at the stern of the boat, was dully conscious of enclosing scrub and reeds, grey-green, rising to a sun-bleached whiteness of tops and tassels—of this muddy water hedged in by reeds and brushwood, with the outlook hidden to him, thus recumbent. Dully conscious now of the burning of the

sunlight on the water, and now the disordered darkness of the clouds, of an intensity of humid heat still in this blaze of sunlight, or in a lull of, or an obstruction to, the sea wind.

Scarcely he heeded the movement of John Batman's Sydney Blacks, manning the boat—blackness of matted hair and beard, play of muscles to their paddles, blackness of flesh; fluttering shreds of a striped cotton shirt; yellow glint of a brass belt-buckle; red of a tattered bandanna knotted about a dusky head.

Mr. Gellibrand and Mr. Robertson were talking weakly and wearily—David huddled at their feet. At times Mr. Gellibrand would ask him how he fared, and would rally and encourage him—by noon they should reach the Settlement; the march from Western Port through the heat and the succeeding rain, was over. At Mr. Henry Batman's house, or Dr. Cotter's, or—with dry laughter—at Mr. Fawcner's hotel, Mr. Cleeve would soon forget the *Norval*, and the last three days of journey. He would have a pleasanter story to offer to Mr. Henry Cleeve concerning Dutigalla, which they approached, and the Port Phillip Association's territory.

The Colonist's eyes were kindly, and his sun-cracked lips smiled. Unshaven, sun-blistered, hollow of eyes, with his clothes soaked by the rain, and now drying and shrivelling upon him, he offered—like David, like Robertson with him, or his son Tom, and his companion gone

ahead to the Settlement—cruel evidence of disaster.

From the encampment in the scrub that first night on the weary way from Western Port, the Colonists had set out at daylight for the beach. By eight o'clock they had reached a salt creek, leading them down to the Bay. But the water-bottles were emptying; thirst was not to be allayed by the brackish water found near a group of native huts. Not till they had struggled on for six miles had they found a creek with fresh water in plenty.

For two hours they had rested; they had pushed on through the scrub till six o'clock in the evening, and from it had made again to the beach, meeting the merciful coolness of the sea wind indeed, but beaten soon by violent squalls and lashing rain. They had camped in the early evening under the cover of a tent of blankets—the rain had continued to fall heavily till two o'clock in the morning.

They had started off before dawn, and had tramped till eight o'clock, confident that they approached the mouth of the Yarra Yarra. But the water was giving out; their strength was failing. By noon Leake and young Gellibrand had sunk down, gasping that they could not go on till they had drunk water. Only the leader's exhortations to struggle on, for they were near the Settlement and safety, had induced new effort. They had rested and pushed on—the weaker members of the party

falling far behind. They had found a little water from a soakage. At last they had known themselves near the Settlement, having seen a stack of wattle bark and the track of cart wheels.

Night had fallen, but they had not reached the River. Happily they had found water near the beach. They had passed the night in exhaustion, and in misery from the streaming rain.

That morning, having tramped for several miles, they had reached the River. Mr. Gellibrand could scarcely walk from blistered feet, and he had sent on his son, with other Colonists, to obtain a boat or a horse from the Settlement; yet, by indomitable will, he had forced his way three miles along the bank, with Robertson and David—till the boat, manned by the Sydney Blacks and bound for Indented Head for fishing, had picked them up. It was carrying them up to the Settlement

The Settlement of Dutigalla—the village among pastures! A lure to sheep owners through Van Diemen's Land. In sick weariness, in pain of burnt and raw and blistered flesh—with the sole consolation for misery that at no time he had uttered complaint, at no time had faltered or disobeyed, but had struggled on and on, to the word of Mr. Gellibrand—David's dull thoughts were satiric.

This the land of splendour on which Mr. Joseph Tice Gellibrand would found his free

Colony—his new Utopia! This the fabled land acclaimed by John Batman as a pastoral Paradise! This the territory of his amazing purchase from the Chiefs of the Black tribes of Port Phillip! This the province with which Henry Cleeve thought to build up new trade!

Or, with noon, this miserable village of huts of turf, or wattle-and-daub, above the steep bank to his left—the new Settlement, the new town with which the Cleeves of Hobart Town might find it profitable to trade! This, as the climax of the misery of the crossing of the Strait, and the weary way from Western Port!

This! . . . David could have no thought that the sturdy Settlement of the free Colonists from Van Diemen's Land preluded the magical rise of the City of Melbourne to greatness within twenty years. Having only the bitter thought of the tramp through the sunburnt sands and scrub from Western Port to the mouth of the River Yarra—the thought excluded memory of glimpses from the high ground above the river, of a fair land, golden with high grasses, clouded faintly with she-oaks, and shimmering away to the haze of mountains, blue-grey, visional. And of sweet sunlight on the higher ground, and the sea wind blowing coolly up the blue and silver Bay.

Mr. Gellibrand, looking down at him, was

urging: "Take heart, Mr. Cleeve! . . . The way from Western Port is not Port Phillip. We'll rest to-day, and to-morrow we'll ride out over the Downs of Iramoo—the richest pastures ever a man has seen—Mr. Batman so assures me!"

CHAPTER XXV

CONFLICT RENEWED

TO David, walking down Macquarie Street on his way to the Cleeve Stores, familiar scenes and figures offered a sense of unreality. Port Phillip and his ride with Mr. Gellibrand and his fellow-members of the Association on a tour of the Territory—Geelong, the Barwon, and that far splendour of herbage and forest, viewed from the Anakie Hills—the happiness and the beauty of the sunlit days, his understanding of the richness of pastures, and the promise of fertility—sense even of the rude strength of the little Settlement on the Yarra Yarra, and of its men—contrast of strong, good-humoured Henry Batman with hard, shrewd, John Pascoe Fawkner—the factions of the Association men and Fawkner men; the bitterness and yet the fellowship, confidence in the new country, and the abuse of Governor Bourke, of New South Wales, and Governor Arthur, of Van Diemen's Land—were his realities.

Hobart Town, the Cleeve Stores and the Cleeve household, seemed as unreal as the memory of the storm across the Strait, and the misery of the journey from Western Port.

And dominating Port Phillip and its men and purpose of a Colony free from the Governors of the penal settlements, free from their swarm of satellites and dependants, free from officialdom and convictism—the personality of Joseph Tice Gellibrand! Austere, reticent, yet generous and unpretentious—a man to lead men, and to sway youth. Honoured among free Colonists of the Island, hated by Government House, and to young David Cleeve, hero and inspiration.

Port Phillip—matched with the little life of the Stores, and dullness of the Cleeve routine in office and in home! . . . Port Phillip for a man—those days of riding by plain and hill and forest, under sunlight, and in the sweet breeze singing from the sea. Nights at the stations of the Port Phillip men, or in the bush camps! Port Phillip . . . Gellibrand . . . purpose . . . life!

Freedom from the Cleeves, to follow the dictates of his mind and heart, to fashion life as he would, and to have about him who he would—no Cleeve! . . . His Mother. . . Anne?

He had hated life in Uncle Henry's home and office since they had driven again his Mother from him.

Uncle Henry had seemed strange, troubled, ill, though overjoyed at David's return through Launceston. He had listened with intentness and with many questions to the narrative, told

over the wine, and through the hours in his study. David's report—it need be only brief—could be written at leisure in the office. Cleeve & Cleeve must seize this opportunity. Its trade with Port Phillip would increase rapidly with the swift growth of the sturdy Settlement, as Uncle Henry envisaged it from David's description. Wool—the export of wool to England—would mean such enrichment and progress of the Colonies as the Governors were incapable of understanding. Port Phillip would prove to be Mr. Gellibrand's blow at the System—convictism!

David, on entering the Cleeve Stores, was received by Mr. Allen with outstretched hand.

“Good morning, my dear David! Home again, safe and sound? We have all been anxious for you!”

David thanked him with cool politeness, and replied with brevity to his questions. Yes, the crossing of the Strait had been rough. The party had been compelled to walk from Western Port to Port Phillip. Yes, the village was small. Yes, he had ridden over the Association's property with Mr. Gellibrand. Yes, the country was beautiful and rich, and the pastures beyond thought or imagination. Yes, he saw a definite prospect of trade with the Settlement of value to Cleeve & Cleeve.

Mr. Allen, in his excess of pleasure and interest, accompanied him to Mr. Cleeve's room. “A letter for you, David!” and he

pointed to the letter on his desk, and he watched David furtively when he took it in his hands.

David's look was impassive as he glanced at the address. He laid the letter down. "Thank you. I'll read it presently!" and he turned to Mr. Cleeve's desk and the waiting letters.

"Thank you, Mr. Allen," he repeated.

Mr. Allen had lingered, but at the dryness of David's tone, and the sharpness of his glance, he went from the room.

Instantly David broke the seal, and opened the letter. He was trembling now; his eyes were dim; he held the letter to the clear light of the window, and read:

"My Dear Boy,

"I thought not to write to you—not to approach you again, but to vanish out of your life, just as quickly as I re-entered it. I could not bear the thought of hurting you, and making you poor when you could be rich. I could not rob you of all that Mr. Henry Cleeve has promised to you.

"But you have written to me so many letters, so pitiful, and so dear—and you have seemed to sorrow for me so, and to want me so much, and to be so much afraid for me! So I write this letter to you only to tell you that you need not fear for me, for I am a governess once more, and I am saving the money slowly to

go back to England. And I am happy—yes, happy! Believe this, David, dear!

“And if I wish I need not fear to be poor again; but I shall accept nothing from Mr. Cleeve, though Mr. Lade, his lawyer, has offered to pay me an allowance of money as the widow of Mr. Charles Cleeve—Mr. Lade writes, but he means that if I accept this money I must agree not to approach you or see you again.

“David, I can’t accept any money from Mr. Henry Cleeve in my husband’s name! For I can’t promise—I can’t be sure—I don’t know that I have the strength—to keep any promise that I will not see you again. Dear, I know that I should not write this letter to you, I know that I should not have come into your life again. You would have loved me better, David, if you had not known me—all about me—all they’ve told you I was!

“Dear, write many letters to me, please, please; but don’t try to find me—don’t quarrel again with Mr. Cleeve because of me. For even though you come to me in Sydney—and I beg you not to come to Sydney—you will not keep me with you, David! I shall go from you as I went from you in Hobart Town. Secretly! For I’ll not have you give up all—lose all—because of me, knowing poverty, and fearing it for you.

“Dear, write letters to me, and I shall write letters to you. And believe—please—Miss

Welland was not speaking the truth. I could not love you so if I had wronged you so.

YOUR MOTHER."

The letter bore no address or date. David stood by the window with the paper fluttering in his trembling hand. He struggled with emotion, love for her and pity for her, and with a storm of passion against Henry Cleeve.

Cleeve had known of this letter lying in the office, and had not spoken of it to him at once. He had known through Lade that David's Mother was living in Sydney, and had not sailed for England; and he had said no word to David, recognizing that no power of his—no order, no authority—could hold him in Hobart Town and apart from her. Cleeve had offered money to her as a bribe to her not to approach David, but to pass out of his life for ever.

By what right—demanding, insisting, that she should not be with him, but keep away from him, as though she were shameful and shaming, affronting the pride of the Cleeves and destroying their serenity?

Cleeve had acted with a hateful secrecy and silence, which had baffled David, wanting only to know the charge against her, to challenge and defend for her. Cleeve had pretended honour as the motive for his silence, implying her dishonour. Knowing that David could not learn, could not bring himself to ask, to

question others, discuss his Mother with others. Baffling him by silence and destroying her.

The storm of passion swept through his mind. Definite thought and purpose shaped through a whirl of thoughts. He seemed controlled—his look was cold and white, his eyes direct, and his voice steady, addressing Mr. Cleeve on his arrival in his office.

"This letter is from my Mother—I wish you to read it!"

Cleeve walked past him to hang up hat and coat, and did not glance at him as he said, quietly: "I do not wish to read the letter, David."

"I wish you to read it."

"I decline to do so, David."

"You shall read it! And you'll answer me when you've read it." David had stepped forward; his eyes were ablaze now and his voice hard and dry.

Cleeve, turning to face him, steadied himself for new encounter. "David, I shall not read the letter now. You may give it to me and I shall read it at my leisure, and endeavour to satisfy you on any question raised by Mrs. Cleeve. At my leisure, I say—possibly this evening."

"Now!"

Cleeve did not speak. He washed his hands, put on his silken jacket, and walked to his desk. David thrust the letter before him.

.. "You'll read it now and you'll answer me!"

"David, you will please to conduct yourself in my office with the good manners and respect which I demand of any of my clerks. Or you will leave it—now!"

He rang the bell. Mr. Allen tapped instantly at the door and entered the room.

Cleeve took the letter, folded it, and dropped it into a drawer of his desk. "Go through the letters for me, David. Now, Allen, if you please."

David took up the papers and stumbled to his desk, as Mr. Allen advanced, brisk, smiling, and obsequious.

CHAPTER XXVI

ACTION DELAYED

THROUGH the brief conference with Mr. Allen—swift survey, comment, and decision—Mr. Cleeve was conscious of David's struggle for, and his attainment of, control, by his delay at first to open the letters, and by his nervous movements, the rustling and crackling of papers, as letter by letter was opened and sorted. Glancing at David once, he saw him white-faced but steady of hands, and seeming to have concentrated his mind on the work before him.

Cleeve knew a faint sense of triumph. The boy was acquiring a habit of self-control and discipline—a balance of mind which should profit him and his administration of Cleeve & Cleeve in years to be. This was no indecisive weakling, as Cleeve had feared to his recent maturity. David had force of will and purpose—manhood.

Cleeve nerved himself for renewal of conflict at Allen's withdrawal from the room. His sense of triumph and satisfaction was definite, when at his summons: "Now, David, please!" David rose, took up the letters and laid them arranged in order before him; and at his words: "Sit down, David!" took the chair

beside his desk, with pencil and paper ready for his dictation.

Meeting self-control with self-control, Cleeve dealt swiftly, clearly, and decisively with the letters, and dismissed David to his desk. His approval and admiration of him were strengthened by his immediate concentration on his task. Cleeve affected not to watch him, though studying him furtively—the boy's white, intent look and the firmness of his lips gave him sudden cause for doubt. Had his tactics failed in truth? Had David reached a decision, not to be influenced by any new discussion, order, or appeal? Was this fulfilment of his duties no more than the action of a mere automaton—evidence in no way of defeat or reconciliation with defeat, or acceptance of the dictates of Henry Cleeve?

Cleeve made a show of activity. His bell summoned to him head after head of branch or department of the Stores and their activities. Attended by Mr. Allen, he made a tour of the Stores, inspected and appraised the silks and satins of the latest consignment. Cigar at lips, he walked out to the wharf, and for the while watched, and affected to direct, the despatch of grain and wool to the merchantman loading for London.

All this while his mind was detached from the affairs of Cleeve & Cleeve by the thought of David, sitting, white and hard of look, at the desk. He returned to his office, took

Isabel's letter from the drawer, and read it. David, he knew, did not glance at him.

He was alert instantly to the effect of the letter on David's mind, and the menace of its challenge to his own authority and aims. In his first dark rage he interpreted Isabel's motive to be to draw the boy to her. Such a letter was bound to impel him to leave Hobart Town for Sydney, in quest of her, in defiance of Cleeve's authority. Rage passed for an uneasy sense of the justice of her cause, and of pity for her. Memories rose, gloomy and accusing—the dull fool Charles, that he had thought to curb and discipline her, and failing in folly—as in trust of her—had turned her from his doors, precipitating tragedy, lending colour and credence to the scandal that shamed her, ostracized her, beyond hope of restoration to her social caste, the Cleeves—her son.

He suppressed the memories—the hateful, haunting memory of his own guilt. He directed his mind to the solution of the problem—how now to hold David; how now to defeat an influence stronger, he knew, than any force of will or authority of guardianship of his own?

The boy was nearly twenty-one years of age. Three months more, and he must inherit his father's estate, small, yet sufficient to support him and his mother—sufficient to place him beyond the power of Henry Cleeve, who loved him as a son, and planned for him only—or Cleeve & Cleeve.

How now? . . . Surrender to Isabel Cleeve—sanction her return to Hobart Town—the boy's withdrawal from his home to hers—with the retention of his prospects with Cleeve & Cleeve? Defy society? That was nothing; the narrow circle of the Island—Government House, officialdom, and the free Colonists, and their wives and families—how should they count to Henry Cleeve?

Admit defeat!

The thought was intolerable. Remembering long ago.

The morning was passing to noon. David was gathering up his letters. When they were read, and signed, and sealed, David would be free to leave the office for lunch. Cleeve would be alone for thought and purpose.

"Thank you, David. I shall read them at my leisure. You may go out to lunch now, I think; it is turning twelve o'clock."

"But——"

"Now, I think, David!"

"My mother's letter——?"

"I have read it. Here it is. Thank you."

"Will you listen to me, sir, now?"

"Not now, David! I have said this evening!"

"I insist!"

"Nay, I insist, David! I will allow no such affair—personal affair—though of interest acute to you—and to me—to trespass on the affairs of Cleeve & Cleeve."

CHAPTER XXVII

CLEEVE—BUT CLEEVE!

CLEEVE did not drive home with David from the Stores that day.

During the heat of the summer he had given up his horsemanship. He feared the activity as likely to induce the recurrence of pain. His freedom from attack for the past month, and his confidence in his restoration to health led him, that cool and pleasant afternoon, to send for his horse. He would ride through the Government Paddock and back by New Town.

He admitted to himself no tax on mind and nerves from the tense struggle of his will with David's will through the day—the boy's insistence on discussion of Mrs. Cleeve and the questions inevitable from her letter, and his own refusal, directed by no petty tyranny, or absurd stipulation that a personal affair, even of vital importance to David and himself, should not intrude on the work of Cleeve & Cleeve, but through his own indecision. The ride should clear his mind of doubts and sentimental follies.

He left the office at five o'clock. Going out, he ignored David's white look, or the passion burning in his eyes. He rode slowly into the

Government Paddock, feeling a weariness of mind and body, and not responding to the warmth of the sun, the keenness of the sea breeze, or the beauty of the River Derwent and its shores below him to his right.

He heeded with lack of interest the carriages of the wealth and fashion of Hobart Town. He bowed stiffly on recognition, but he did not rein in his horse so that he might greet and talk with wife and daughters of official or free Colonist—from his melancholy, and his absorption in the problem of Isabel Cleeve and David. Riding slowly, he kept his horse apace with the horses of an open carriage, and he did not glance at the occupants of the carriage. He had ridden far out toward New Town, before he noticed that Rachel Welland was driven in her carriage beside him.

Her veil was raised from her pale face. She seemed not to heed him. In his glance and momentary confusion he believed that her lips were smiling faintly and contemptuously. She did not bow to him; and, touching his horse with his whip, he rode past the carriage without salutation, having a thought of her pallor and rigidity, and of her hatred and contempt for him, unappeased by years.

His memory of her—and chiefly of her in the final and irreconcilable quarrel—intruded on, and played its cruel and humiliating part and association with, Isabel Cleeve and himself. Rachel had suspected his disloyalty to

her. She had understood the death of his affection for her, and his desire to be free from his engagement to her, though he had continued to profess his admiration for her. She had not known the truth then. She had learnt this through intuition, suspicion, or merciless logic, only on Isabel Cleeve's return to Hobart Town, and his interview with her at the Welland house. He had betrayed to her, despite his confidence of scrupulous control, by voice, or look, the passion unslaked, enduring, and continuing to torment him.

His cheek was hot—not from the sunlight, but from his sense of shame. He should have shown manhood long ago. He should have declared frankly and boldly to Charles that he, not Faraday——!

He checked the torment of the thought. He must have clearness of mind and purpose in encountering David that night. He won neither clearness nor decision from reflection, and from the ride no elation, sense of vigour and health, but only weariness.

Cleeve rode to his home, bathed, and changed his clothes before going down to dinner. He hid from Serena, he believed, his discomfort—sickness of mind or body. He talked lightly and gaily of the affairs of the day, and he listened politely to her chatter and trivialities—of the house, the Cleeves, and their circle. He endeavoured to arouse in David a

. .

responsive show of interest still in the theme of Port Phillip and his adventures.

David held himself coldly and obstinately aloof, scarcely speaking, eating and drinking little, and facing him at table with their wine, watching him with sullen eyes, and seeming on the verge of outburst.

Deliberately Cleeve, ere he made his way to the study, lingered in the parlour with Miss Serena. Her questions were troubled—what was amiss with David and him—what now? He confided to her that Mrs. Charles had written a letter to David, and that he had deferred, to his interview with the boy now, the assertion of his authority.

He had acquired from many glasses of wine a definite renewal of strength and confidence. On entering the study, he found David awaiting him, and from his irritation of this breach of the Cleeve code—that no member of the household should precede him to the study or enter it without his summons—he checked himself only with the ironic thought, what could rule or regulation count with impending crisis, as, in truth, he recognized this interview?

David had risen from his seat beside the table as Cleeve entered. He did not speak; his pallor was clear even through the sunburn of Port Phillip, and his eyes were sullen and intent. With a glance of arrogance and anger at him, Cleeve walked to the hearth, and would have leaned against the chimney-shelf and

faced him so, but for a sense of weakness—a tendency to reel and fall, as from vertigo, or from the heaviness of wine upon him—he walked to his desk and sat down. David did not advance, but stood beside the table still, and faced him.

“Pray, sit down, David!” Cleeve said. And David, not heeding, he was impelled peevishly to protest. “Must you stand so and glare like a madman at me? Is it not possible for you to control yourself, as a man should, and must in my house in any talk between us?”

David moved forward, and stared down at him. His control of voice and gaze was surer than Cleeve’s own control.

“I have endured all day your whim and pleasure—not to consider—not to speak—till to-night, of my Mother’s letter to me, and its bearing on her future and my own. Are you not content with this? Is this no proof of my control and my endurance?”

“You dare to use such a tone to me,” Cleeve said—and the grip of his fingers on his desk symbolized ruthless assertion of will over weakness, doubt, and hesitation—“that I am tempted to say to you now that there will be no discussion—I shall tolerate none—of this letter and its writer, or hope of alteration or amendment of my decision—it is known to you.”

He paused an instant; he proceeded steadily then: “I have consented to hear you—any-

thing you have to say—which may weigh with me, and my decision on her return—that I allow no association of you with her, or approach of her to you, as my ward and heir.”

“Sir,” David said, “I do not guess—I do not understand yet—the reason for my Mother’s going so from Hobart Town, other than her concern for me—your threat of injury to me by disinheritance—and through her dread that, listening to me, and knowing from me that loss—if that be loss—is nothing to me, she might be induced to stay with me. Defying you, and any threat of yours, as I should have defied you—and defy you now. What other reason should she have than this?”

“Is this a question to me?”

“It is my question—yes!”

“There is a reason stronger than this reason, David!” Cleeve’s voice was hard, and clear as steel, and his look inflexible. He repeated: “There is a reason!”

“Give me the reason!”

“No! I shall not give the reason!”

“I demand——”

“Demand of her, then, not of me!”

“Is she at liberty to speak?”

“As I am not at liberty to speak!”

“Or I at liberty to ask her!”

Colour had mounted to David’s brow; fire had flamed in his sombre eyes. His voice, in its hard, insistent strength, had prevailed over Cleeve’s cold, clear voice, and its note of

mastery. Now power and passion seemed to die in him. He drew back from the desk, and stumbled to the hearth, and leaned against the shelf, and bowed his head upon his arms. "No one is free to ask that question of her."

"Have I compelled the question?" Cleeve sneered. "Have I suggested there could be aught against her, for all the years of your life in my house? Have you heard aught belittling her, or reflecting on her, or summoning up for her—or against her—the past, the sorrow of the past, her tragedy and our greater tragedy?"

"Yet you kept secret from me that she was living still!"

"For your sake, David!"

"No!"

"And for her sake?"

"No, I say!"

"Thinking her dead, you loved her and revered her!"

"Knowing her living—still I love—and I revere—as never I loved her as she was suggested by you all, a visionary saint, a Cleeve saint in a Cleeve Heaven."

"What need of this now from you to me—knowing my thought only to spare you from knowledge?"

"To spare me!" David turned, and leaned forward, eyes aflame. "To spare me! Was that your motive?"

"To spare you—and her!"

"No!"

"David, I'll not tolerate this. I'll not listen longer to you. Go!"

"Out of your house?"

"Out of this room."

"Out of your house—readily out of your house! But knowing—knowing—why you were silent all those years! Not for her sake—not for mine—for your own sake.

Cleeve did not falter. His hand was steady on the desk. His eyes were clear and direct, and his voice unshaken: "David, if you think to go to her——"

"I am going to her!"

"If you go to her, I say again, ask her this question—had I cause for silence other than thought for her—and you? . . . Nay, listen—do not interrupt me—again interrupt me, but listen to me—for I shall say my say, and make an end! Go to her—if you will—knowing that, if you go, whatever the grief to me—whatever the loss and loneliness to me—for I have loved you dearly, and hoped and planned for you, you shall not come again to me or to my house! My doors—even as my heart—shall be closed fast against you! You shall have from me—nothing! You may hope to inherit nothing other than your father's small estate; it has lain all these years untouched, not invested in, not increased by, the trade of Cleeve & Cleeve!"

"I go to-night!"

. .

"To-night—to-morrow—as you will! I shall not seek again to hold you by me. I shall not lift my voice again in remonstrance or in caution or in appeal to you—for your own sake to trust me and obey me. The choice is yours—to stay with me; but, staying, to obey and trust me!"

"Trust you?"

"Unquestioning, to trust me!"

"Answer my question!"

"Which you should not ask!"

"My question—my question——"

"I shall not answer," Cleeve said. "Go—now!"—and wearily he sank back in his chair, and did not look again at David, hesitant for a little while, seeming to struggle with a storm of passion, and to gain control, and going then swiftly and in silence from the room.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE UNWRITTEN WORDS

MISS SERENA, by the fireside in the parlour, with the windows fast shut and the curtains drawn against the strengthened and chill wind from the south, was knitting from habit, and without purpose to divert her mind from the knowledge and the fear of new strife between her brother and David.

No sound of voices could pass from the study had she so far yielded to her curiosity and fear as to leave the parlour and approach the door. From the parlour she heard only the sound of David's footsteps to the hall. He seemed to hesitate, and at the thought that he might be going out of the house, she left her chair, and opened the door, and called to him: "David! You're not going out, are you?" And hearing his reply, dull and hoarse: "No! Not yet, Aunt!"—she appealed to him: "Dear, won't you come and sit with me for a while, and talk to me?"

His voice was hoarse and lifeless still: "No, if you please, not now, Aunt Serena!"—to her disquiet.

She would have gone to him instantly, but he was already stumbling up the stairs. She hoped that he was going to bed.

She knew the cause of quarrel—the tenseness between Henry and David had been clear to her at the dinner table. Mrs. Charles! She knew from Henry that Isabel was still in Sydney—still a menace to the Cleeve peace and happiness, and control of David. Mrs. Charles must have written in her letter to David—a letter saying—what else should it say?—that she could not bear the separation from him, and that she was coming back to Hobart Town, and that he must go to her.

Loving David—having suffered even through the separation from him in that rash, dangerous visit to Port Phillip, Serena Cleeve understood, at least, Isabel's heart and mind, even if her own jealousy allowed no pity.

Isabel should not take the boy from them! Henry must assert himself—prevent it—defeat her! . . .

Henry had the right!

Serena Cleeve dropped a stitch in her knitting. She looked suddenly in the direction of the study, envisaging Henry at his desk, his letters—his diary. Henry had the right to hold David yet.

She did not pick up the stitch. Knitting and needles slipped unheeded to the floor. Miss Serena's reflections were such as now to bring colour to her cheeks, to cause her hands to tremble, her piety to frame and her lips to utter whispered prayers and intercessions.

Henry had the right! . . . Thank God that at least Charles had been spared the knowledge—the cruel knowledge!

Yet Henry had the right! David must not go to Isabel—that wicked woman, Isabel!

She looked again—with sense of terror—toward the study. Henry—should she go to him—should she dare to tell him of the diary that November morning? She had not really been inquisitive and prying. She had not so far forgotten herself as gentlewoman! . . . But the fear since, and the sense of shame!

Still envisaging Henry seated at his desk with his letters—or the diary open before him, recording the event of the day—of new quarrel with David, because of Isabel. Longing to tell him, and beg him to forgive her, that she had glanced at the open diary that morning—chanced to see. She was too much afraid. She would not dare to confess. She could not bring herself to tell him she had read the words he had written. No gentlewoman could!

But . . . but . . . she could not endure to wait here much longer in this anxiety for him and David, all through Isabel—and her sin of long ago!

Envisaging—imagining, yet forming no faithful picture of Henry Cleeve in his study.

Cleeve sat silent and exhausted at his desk, long after David had gone from the study. His thought of failure was calamitous. He had lacked strength of will, and wisdom, in this

conflict with the boy—the beloved boy! His threat, though made with rigid control of voice and eyes—though sounding ruthless, and final, had meant no more than the nervous outbreak of the defeated man

Defeated—yes—in love, and hope, and ambition for the boy! Defeated still, as long ago, by Isabel Cleeve. Having lost all!

The papers on his desk crackled and rustled beneath his arms. The mere sound recalled him to habit and routine. He must read the letters and reports, and at least determine his replies, not write.

No! He was too weary to-night. He would go from the study to Serena presently, and talk with her a little while, and confide in her so much as he deemed proper to confide—not distressing her unduly. He would go then to his room. The drug might give him respite—forgetfulness. The diary—yes, he would write a few lines in the diary. He would not relinquish that habit. He would write. . . .

He rose, and walked slowly and feebly to the safe. He took out the diary, and returned to his desk. Turning over the leaves, he noticed suddenly the record unfinished through David's interruption on the eve of Isabel's flight from Hobart Town:

David has asked me this night whether, in truth, he is my son. I have denied this, though my heart yearns for him. Had I

. . .

not heeded Isabel, the hurt to her, and that obligation of a gentleman, I might have been led to tell him——

That unfinished sentence suggested more than he had thought to write—even in his anger and distress thought to write. He must write—alter—erase. . . . If anyone read . . . later . . . if David read?

He stretched out his hand for his pen. It had fallen to the floor. He leaned from his chair to pick it up.

This agony at heart; this sense of choking . . . falling. . . .

CHAPTER XXIX

WILL AND TESTAMENT

MR. JAMES LADE, spectacled, middle-aged, glossy, of funeral black, ended his reading of the will of Henry Cleeve, raised his head and looked at the Cleeves assembled in the study. This look invited and suggested his confidence in his competence to reply satisfactorily to questions.

Miss Serena had dictated the use and the preparation of the study for this solemn assemblage of Cleeves, on return from the funeral, for Mr. Lade's reading of poor Henry's will. Miss Serena's intense grief had not blinded her to the impropriety and probability of a dispute on such a day with Susannah, on the opening of the parlour windows, or the difficulty likely to face Mr. Lade in reading in a room darkened with brocade curtains against the sunlight which mocked mourning, and would cause the fading of the dyes and patterns of the parlour carpet.

Mr. Lade, then, was seated at the table in the study, with the will before him, and Miss Serena to his right and James and Susannah Learoyd to his left, and Joseph and Amelia and Richard Allen grouped on the long sofa by the window, and David at the foot of

the table. David sat stiffly, his face very pale, his eyes very heavy, but his lips in a hard line.

Serena, watching him with tear-dimmed eyes and sad affection, had detected no change of expression on his face during the reading of the will. Perhaps dear David had not understood that the Cleeve fortune was his, without restriction or deductions, apart from the annuity to herself, the gifts to Susannah and James, and the faithful servants of the house and Cleeve & Cleeve. Though dear Henry had forgotten Cousin James and Amelia and Richard, he had left £100 to Caroline, but that was all.

No, David could not have understood that he was the heir—all was his. Or was he troubled still by the thought of the quarrel with poor Henry on that dreadful night, even though his Aunt Serena had told him again and again that it was not the quarrel—poor Uncle Henry had been ill for a long while, his doctor had known how serious it was and had cautioned him?

David looked so white and sad and strange. Not so sad as Cousin Joseph or Amelia or Richard. Joseph's eyes were round and staring, his mouth was open—he was gaping like a fish.

Mr. Lade was waiting for one of them to speak—not patiently waiting, perhaps, for his fingers were tapping on the parchment.

“Ha-hum!” Mr. Lade coughed.

James was leaning forward, his brown hand touching the table. "I think I follow you aright, Mr. Lade—the will leaves practically the whole estate to David?"

"Apart from the bequests."

"Precisely! . . . David steps into poor Cleeve's shoes—David is Cleeve & Cleeve?"

"In effect, certainly."

"And I congratulate David accordingly!" Learoyd said, looking down the table, and nodding at the boy. "I assure him as I assure you, Mr. Lade, that no grudging or jealous spirit prompts my question—happily I need not grudge him or be jealous of his fortune. May I ask this, Mr. Lade?" He hesitated, and glanced again at David.

"Certainly, sir—any question?" Lade said, tapping the parchment still. "Any question!"

"Only this, then? David is a minor—yet, under the will, as I interpret it, he is given full authority, while you and I, sir, are appointed to act only in an advisory capacity?"

Lade nodded. "Undoubtedly, sir!"

"I do not reflect on David or his sense of responsibility," Learoyd said, leaning back in his chair, "when I say that granting such powers to a minor over an estate—or a trading house of the importance of Cleeve & Cleeve—and involving such problems and difficulties in its control and management, is unlike Mr. Cleeve—extraordinarily unlike him!"

"The explanation's simple, sir," Lade said

dryly. "It lies in Mr. Cleeve's affection for Mr. David Cleeve——"

"I grant you that, but——"

"Pardon me! And in Mr. Cleeve's confidence in his own health and vigour. He looked forward to many years of life!"

"Poor Henry," Serena moaned. "Oh, poor, poor Henry!"

"His confidence that he would outlast by many years the date of Mr. David Cleeve's attaining his majority, and of his training and preparing young Mr. Cleeve for the responsibilities of controlling the Cleeve Stores, determined him in his instructions to me. Naturally, I pointed out the possibility of his death before young Mr. Cleeve—ha-hum!—was fully qualified by years and experience to take Mr. Cleeve's place at the head of such a House. You, Mr. Cleeve"—with a smile and bow at David—"will acquit me of any reflection on your capacity for such responsibility—as yet!"

David nodded, not speaking.

"Thank you!" Lade said. "My late client did not take my advice. He clearly viewed the contingency as an impossibility—or, at least, as so remote from probability as not to justify guardianship for his nephew during his minority. He was anxious, he assured me, that Mr. David Cleeve should not be fettered or restricted in his administration of Cleeve & Cleeve. In any case, he was likely to assume control only in his maturity, and with full

qualifications. Have I satisfied you, Mr. Learoyd?"

Learoyd nodded. "Thank you, yes, Mr. Lade. Beyond assuring David—and you, sir, of my readiness to fulfil my duties, as adviser to him—and according to his wishes—I have no comment."

He looked again with kindness at David.

David's voice was expressionless: "Thank you, sir."

Mr. Lade turned to Miss Serena. "Have I made everything clear to you, Miss Cleeve?"

Serena touched her eyes with her handkerchief, sniffed, and assented faintly.

"Mr. Learoyd," Lade said. "Mr. Learoyd, I took it, spoke for you, as for himself. . . . Thank you. . . . Mr. Allen, sir?"

Mr. Allen's eyes were staring still, and his mouth was open. He mopped his forehead—and his eyes—with his handkerchief, and he rubbed his perspiring hands. Mrs. Allen's aspect was stony. Dick lounged on the sofa, with his legs crossed, his hands in his pockets, and his eyes fixed on the ceiling.

"Mr. Allen—Mrs. Allen—have you any questions?" Mr. Lade asked crisply. "Or have I made everything clear and satisfactory to you?"

Mr. Allen seemed to recover his balance: "I beg your pardon, sir, I'm sure; I beg your pardon. No questions—none at all. I gather

that Mr. David Cleeve succeeds Mr. Henry Cleeve immediately?"

"Certainly, sir!"

"Then," Mr. Allen said, with enthusiasm, "I congratulate the new Head of our House—I do, indeed! And, like Mr. Learoyd, here, I assure him of our loyalty—my son's loyalty and mine, sir—and of our affection, my family's affection—and mine!"

But David did not glance at Mr. Allen.

CHAPTER XXX

GLOOM, HOPE, DECISION

DAVID sat alone at table. The sea winds had grown stronger with the night, and their sound about the house was melancholy. The curtains drawn before the windows stirred sluggishly to draughts, and this cold movement of the air disordered the lights of the candles. High, branching candlesticks stood to right and left of David's place at the head of the table. The decanter of wine before him was untouched, and his glass dry.

Always the shadows seemed to him to hang about him, and the room to bear the blackness and the silver of funeral trappings, and, from the dim reflection in the mirrors of the candle-flames, the pale gold and the whiteness of the flowers that day. White of face and black of clothes, seeming narrow-shouldered and undersized from the vastness of the room, he sat lonely, on this first night of his mastery of the House of Cleeve.

He was unable yet to divert mind and spirit from the gloom and state of the day, the climax of the days of gloom since the death of Henry Cleeve. He was unable to repel his sense of guilt through that last quarrel. He envisaged

Cleeve now—facing him in the study, the cold, clear eyes, the look of strength and decision, and yet his own understanding, in that undertone, of an emotion which Cleeve had thought, yet failed, to conceal. And thinking to go from Cleeve's house on the following morning—for ever, and lying awake, without regret for parting from Cleeve, but planning only the future, and picturing his Mother and her delight when he followed her to Sydney—loving her so much as to have given up all for her; not hating and not pitying Mr. Cleeve, he remembered cruelly, he had heard his aunt's wild cry; he had rushed down the stairs, and had seen——

He could not exclude from his mind the memory of the marble whiteness of Cleeve's face—its grandeur—the pride and mockery of the lips—it had seemed to David. Thence this semblance—this white mask of Cleeve's reality—had seemed to dominate the sombre pageant of the days to the climax—black and silver of funeral trappings; blackness of the Rev. Mr. Bedford's gown and Book; blackness of mourning, state, with Government House, officialdom, trade and commerce of Hobart Town, combined in that last scene of pageantry. The sun had glittered white and silver over St. David's burial-ground, but the breeze had not mourned through the gum trees, and the gaiety of birds had mocked.

Black and silver in this room, and a moaning

wind sounding about the house, and as the lights covered, the shadows closing in on David, heavy as the shadows of Cleeve & Cleeve, closing in!

He was incapable yet of pride or elation or wonder at his inheritance. He had a sense of irony in the finality of the quarrel with Mr. Cleeve, and the purposed splendour of this last gift. He had learnt so to loathe the Stores and their trading—the subjection of his mind and will to Cleeve’s ambition—that he viewed them still as mastering him, not mastered by him. The will and authority of Henry Cleeve endured over David through the Cleeve Stores.

He hated, and he feared the Cleeve Stores!

David was free to exercise will and authority to secure to himself the supreme happiness of his Mother’s restoration to him. Mr. Cleeve had set up no barriers through his will. He had not dreamed, instructing Lade for his will, of the possibility of her return to Hobart Town, or he might have framed—might have devised—the obstacles to her reunion with David. He might have offered choice in his will between inheritance and devotion to her.

But would he have planned so? Had he hated her in truth, or could he have thought to yield to her, after his death, the right which, living, he withheld from her?

That question, unanswered by him—and never to be asked of her—that fear, to be imprisoned in the dark recess of mind—forgotten!

Unforgettable! Yet everything to David from Henry Cleeve—as from father to son?

David swept his right hand across his brow as though passionately to dispel the hateful and persistent thought and fear. He poured wine into his glass and drank. He pictured with emotion—and yet without elation—the meeting with his Mother. She would return! He had written to her immediately on Mr. Cleeve's death, begging—ordering—her return. He had told Mr. Lade this day to write to her, and to send her money for her return. And he had sent off a letter to her, telling her that he was master of Cleeve & Cleeve—the money, this house. She must come to him. She would be mistress of his home. She would be happy—she must be happy!

He must tell Aunt Serena and Aunt Susannah that his Mother was coming home to him. They were in the parlour—he would go tell them now. They would be very angry. Aunt Serena thought to be mistress of the house still, till he married—Anne, he supposed. They wanted him to marry Anne. But Anne?

Anne had spoken in pity of his Mother. Anne had told him to defy Henry Cleeve. Anne would approve now, knowing that his Mother must return to him and share all with him and be mistress of his house. This was his house.

It wasn't all a dream.

CHAPTER XXXI

INDIVIDUALITY OF SERENA CLEEVE

AUNT SUSANNAH was staying for the night in solace to Aunt Serena in her grief and loneliness. Uncle James, with a sympathetic understanding not expected of him by David, had not suggested his companionship for the boy that evening.

David's thought was that Uncle Henry's influence, shaping, disciplining, and directing all the Cleeves, had allowed none to reveal true character or individuality. Learoyd, who had seemed nebulous and indefinite to him, now showed himself shrewd, competent, and kindly. David did not underestimate the value of Learoyd and Lade to him. How should he hope, unaided, to guide the destinies of the Cleeve Stores?

And just as Learoyd, no longer over-shadowed by Mr. Cleeve, was real and of appeal to him, Aunt Serena, whom he had thought as shadowy and colourless as her hair, her caps, and her gowns, had become a reality exacting, and dictatorial—if her purpose had been only to direct him in the punctilious performance of all the duties, and compliance with all the conventions, through time of death and funeral,

even to the band on his hat, the quality of his black gloves, and his black cravat. He had the uneasy feeling that she assumed as her right the head of the household, in succession to the brother of whom she had stood so much in awe.

The idol had fallen, and the high priestess usurped the idol's place on the pedestal.

Aunt Susannah sat on the sofa. Aunt Serena sat in her chair by the fireside. Susannah's rich colour and good looks triumphed over her heavy mourning. Serena, by her pallor and the blackness of her dress, and the hard brightness of her eyes, was definite and distinctive to David, on his entering the parlour, as never during Uncle Henry's lifetime. Almost he imagined in her the arrogance of the Cleeve tilt of chin.

The windows were closed, the curtains were drawn, and the fire burned brightly. Aunt Susannah dabbed her brows and her chin with her handkerchief far more often than she dabbed her eyes.

She smiled sadly and affectionately at David. "Well, my dear? Come and sit down by me—do!"

"Thank you, Aunt." He sat down beside her, facing Serena. Henry's chair stood in its place by the hearth.

"I am glad that you have left your own company at last, David," Susannah said. "Sitting alone with sad thoughts is not good for you, you know, my dear."

He nodded. "Probably not. But there is much I have to consider and decide for myself—naturally."

"But, David, poor Henry planned everything so clearly and well for you," Serena protested. "You have only to follow his plans—and wishes!" Her gaze at him was direct and challenging.

He did not hesitate. He said instantly: "You understand my meaning, Aunt Serena. My Mother's return to me, and the changes it must mean in this house!"

Aunt Susannah's hand touched his hand in evidence of sympathy.

Serena's eyes seemed to darken from the contraction of her brows. Her voice was hard, cold, and unfaltering: "David—is this a thought or consideration fitting for you on the very night of your Uncle's burial?"

He said steadily: "I wish not to distress you, Aunt Serena; but to me it is—must be—my thought, my supreme thought, this night or any night or day! My Mother shall return to me—I am bent on this. I have written to her. I have instructed Mr. Lade. She shall come home!"

"Home!" Serena breathed. "Home!"

"My home!" he said. "And her home!"

"David," Serena whispered, "had my brother lived, this house must have been closed to her. The very night he died—and I speak of this only that you may ask yourself—your cons-

ciency—what was his wish—he told you—this I guess; this I know—that your association with her meant your alienation from him, and your loss of all he had to give—all that so generously he has given! Remembering this, will you take all from him, yet in defiance of him, with no respect for his wish, even though he is dead? Will you not fulfil your obligation to him? Your obligation should be solemn—sacred!”

David said only: “I call my Mother home!”

“David,” Serena said, shuddering now, and seeming to shrink from him, “his mere suspicion of this would have lost you all!”

“I should have lost all willingly for her. He knew this. I was frank with him.”

“It was too late!” Serena whispered. “He would have disinherited you—justly have disinherited you——”

“Oh, Serena!” Susannah cried, in trembling protest. “How can you say this?”

“Knowing!”

He nodded. “Probably not. But there is loved David? David was all in all to him!”

“And he—to David—nothing!”

David had risen, and looked down at Miss Serena. His voice was controlled, and yet decisive. “Aunt, I have considered—I have considered fully since Uncle Henry’s death, just as last year—long before his death—I considered, and resolved. My Mother is more to

me than aught or all on earth. My duty is to her, as my love is hers, supremely hers!"

"By right!" Susannah cried.

Serena, white as death, and shrinking from David still, but with her eyes dark with menace and resentment, whispered: "By no right left to her! She forfeited all . . . long ago she forfeited all!"

"I listen to no reflections on my Mother," David said. "I tolerate none! My home is my Mother's home. She is the mistress of my house—the rightful mistress of my house! . . . I have no wish to dispossess you, Aunt, or hurt you, or humiliate you. You have been mistress of this house all the years I have lived in it. You shall continue mistress of it!"

"When first she enters the house," Serena cried, "I leave it, David!"

"She shall not come to this house! I shall go from it—find—buy or build another house—my own and hers!"

"Give up this house for her?" Serena gasped.

He retorted: "No—for you! You may continue here, as mistress of it. She and I will never dispossess you!"

"David, that's generous—extravagantly generous!" Susannah said. "But it's wise—and splendid—and——"

Serena, with a passionate gesture, cried out harshly: "You mean you'll leave me here—alone—deserting me—for her! You mean that my love of you—and my care of you, all the

years, count nothing to you—measured by her!”

“I thank you for your kindness to me and your affection for me,” David said steadily, “and I offer to you——”

“David, I’ll not bear it! David, I’ll not let her take you from me! David, you don’t know—you don’t guess—what she is—what she has done!”

“Serena! For Heaven’s sake, Serena,” Susannah gasped, starting up. “David, don’t listen to her! David, please go.”

The passion of his burning eyes, his white, distorted face, and his voice unnatural and strained, stilled Serena’s storm of hysteria, and Susannah’s protest and appeal.

“I allow no one to speak so of my Mother in my house! Go from my house. To-morrow and for ever.”

CHAPTER XXXII

ASHES

DAVID sat alone in the study. He had avoided Henry Cleeve's chair at the desk. He was seated, as many a night of Cleeve's lifetime, in the chair by the table. A copy of the will was before him.

He had read and re-read its contents. His thought was satiric that he had imagined that he might find in it any evidence or suggestion of Uncle Henry's mind. The provisions were concise and clear. Everything left to him, only the annuity to Aunt Serena, the gifts to other Cleeves, and the servants.

No hint or suggestion of Mr. Cleeve's attitude towards Mrs. Cleeve. How should his mind be estimated—even by that last quarrel and his threat? Had his words carried conviction? Had David believed——?

David folded the copy of the will. Why torment his mind and conscience with doubts and questions of the dead man's purpose? David had demanded of him only justice to the living—insisted only on his natural right of love for, and from, his Mother—natural right to champion her, to work for her, to make a home for her. No will or plan or action of

Henry Cleeve's could have changed, or could change, his decision.

She would come to this house—yes, to this house. He had a distracting thought of her loveliness and her laughter—of her presence in the house—and of silk and gold for her, in substitution for the pale muslin dress and the crystal beads, though they had seemed beautiful worn by her.

If she were sitting with him now and he watching her—in beauty and in happiness, in the shimmer and sparkle and colour of lovely stuffs and precious stones. In this room, with its rich dimness—in the dining-room, with its dark, panelled, splendour—not in the parlour, colourless, wan, hideous. She would remodel and reconstruct—substitute rosewood, chintz, and delicacy and beauty.

No! He would not dispossess Miss Serena from the hateful, hideous rooms. Let her have the house, and its memories and associations, precious to her, but detested by him. Let her go to-morrow to Aunt Susannah's, as Mrs. Learoyd had begged that evening, after her sister's shameless charge against his Mother, and his order that Miss Serena go from the house, but with the knowledge that she could return to it after he and his Mother had gone from it to their own home. He had a vision of a white stone house in a garden. He would build so for his Mother.

They would be happy in their home—their

white house, and their garden. He would teach her to forget that she had suffered—cruelly and unjustly. They would suffice for company—they, and perhaps Anne. Aunt Susannah had not spoken harshly of his Mother to his memory. Yes, Anne! Nothing to him if the little circle of society excluded his Mother—if it were true that any, except the Cleeves, believed ill of her? Nothing to him. It would be nothing to her, forgetting, and thinking only to be happy.

He started at the opening of the door and the intrusion of Serena Cleeve on his thoughts. He rose as she stood in the doorway. He did not speak; his brows frowned, and his eyes were pitiless and repelling. Seeing her so—deathly pale, her eyes red with weeping, yet glittering, and hard as her voice, he hated her.

"David, I wish to speak to you."

"I shall allow no further slander against my Mother."

"David, learn for yourself all I learned. Know for yourself why I spoke so."

"You spoke through jealousy of her. I'll not forgive it."

"David," she muttered, drawing back from him, "read what is written in my brother's diary—in the safe there, against the wall."

"I'll not read."

"The date is the 20th of November, David, the eve of your Mother's flight to Sydney. Learn why, and judge me justly, David."

She was gone. The door shut noiselessly. He sat down at the table, seeking control, resolution. He would not open the safe. He would not read the diary.

"The date is 20th of November, David—the eve of your Mother's flight for Sydney. Learn why, David."

Why had his Mother fled so from him—secretly from him, having promised—pledged her word—that on the morrow she would leave the Welland house with him, find a quiet lodging, and await his plans for employment by another house than Cleeve & Cleeve, and for their home? Evading him, without a word of farewell. Why? Her letter had not told him. No! Only of her fear to injure him, lose him his inheritance. Cleeve & Cleeve.

What did Serena—what did that woman know? What had Cleeve written?

He started up, opened the safe, and took out the topmost book of the diary. The 20th of November—yes—Cleeve's record of his meeting with his Mother—his threat:

I found her unchanged in beauty, as in mind or spirit . . . my memory of her is vivid and poignant.

Nothing! Nothing! No suggestion or hint.

David has asked me this night whether, in truth, he is my son. I have denied this,

though my heart yearns for him. Had I not heeded Isabel, the hurt to her, and that obligation of a gentleman, I might have been led to tell him——

He let the book fall from his hand. He stood motionless an instant. His hands rose slowly to his brows. He stumbled back to the table, and sank to his chair. He sat staring at the screened hearth before him. Blindly for the while.

He rose and dragged aside the screen. The wood was laid in readiness for the fire. He took the candle from its socket and kindled the wood. He took up the book and flung it on the flames.

Other books were in the safe—Cleeve's diary—telling——?

Ashes would not tell.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE PRISON HOUSE

DAVID, following routine as though Uncle Henry were still the head of Cleeve & Cleeve, and he only his secretary, breakfasted alone at seven o'clock, and left the house at half-past seven without seeing Mrs. Learoyd or Miss Cleeve.

Desire to avoid them, not forgetfulness, even in his abstraction, that he was at liberty to arrive at his own office at nine o'clock, or not at all, if he preferred, sent him thus early to the Cleeve Stores. Town and harbour were beautiful in sunlight and the thin fog of early autumn. His sole heed of the shipping and the activities of the port was induced by a whiteness of sail far down—the *Swan* should be carrying the letters from Mr. Lade and himself to his Mother in Sydney.

The mere thought loosed instantly assailing terrors on his mind. Will and reason, instantly resistant, held terrors at bay. He would be swayed in no way by Henry Cleeve. He would not believe the written words. He would not admit to thought or memory their meaning and significance. He would not conjure up the evil of them out of ashes . . . ashes!

His mind would never frame the question for his mother to answer. She must return to him. She must be mistress of his house. She must be happy with him. All was planned.

He was dully conscious of his new importance to Cleeve & Cleeve. He touched his hat, he nodded, and he wished "Good morning" to watermen, labourers, teamsters, and storemen, acknowledging touch of hats, bows, and a chorus of "Good morning, sir!"

On entering the counting-house he took by surprise Mr. Joseph Allen, who was in an ill-temper, possibly in consequence of the will and the disposition of the Cleeve estate, and was reproving young Mr. Richard Allen.

"Such gross incompetence and such idleness are beyond my experience and endurance! I won't have it, sir! I won't have it! And I won't have such insolence. . . . Oh, good morning, Mr. Cleeve! Good morning, my dear sir! . . . Watkins!"—to the office-boy—"Open the door for Mr. Cleeve at once! Where are your wits? Where is Watkins?" And Watkins not appearing, Mr. Allen himself held open the door for David, and bowed him into his office.

Mr. Allen lingered, dutiful, yet doubtful. "Do you wish me to remain, sir?" he asked, as David hung up his hat, "or will you ring for me?"

"I'll ring for you, thank you, Mr. Allen. At nine o'clock—that was Mr. Cleeve's hour."

"Certainly, sir."

"Mr. Learoyd should be here, then. He promised that he would spend the day at the office with me. We have an appointment with Mr. Lade at ten. So will you have your papers ready by nine?"

"Why, of course, Mr. Cleeve!"

David nodded, and sat down at Mr. Cleeve's desk. The letters were many. He set aside the formal messages of condolence from business houses of Hobart Town and Launceston. He would write the replies. But he must appoint one of the clerks as secretary. Dick Allen? . . . Yes, the fellow was diligent, if directed—David cherished no grudge or grievance. Dick should have the appointment.

David welcomed Learoyd, arriving before nine o'clock. Learoyd's judgment and experience from his service with the East India Company, and coolness and common sense, were impressed more deeply on David's mind with the swift and smooth transaction of business—conference with Mr. Allen, dictation of replies to Richard Allen, decision and direction. His esteem of Learoyd was heightened. He must endeavour to persuade him to emerge from his retirement. His interest in the activities of Cleeve & Cleeve was definite. He would be invaluable!

By half-past nine David's desk was clear. Dick Allen was busied in the outer office on the

letters. David faced Learoyd with an air of satisfaction.

"Well, sir!"

"Well, David—the Cleeve Stores are still the Cleeve Stores!"

"While you are with me, sir!"

"Flattering—very flattering!" Learoyd smoked his cigar reflectively. "I'm here only so long as you need me, David! And I advise you only if you wish to consult me."

"You mean that you are not eager?"

"I mean, David, that the responsibility is your own."

"Is that a reproof, sir?"

Learoyd laughed. "I have no authority to reprove the head of Cleeve & Cleeve—or the inclination."

David leaned back in his chair. His look and tone were moody. "Has the possibility presented itself to you, sir—as never to Uncle Henry—that the Cleeve Stores mean nothing to me?"

Learoyd nodded. "Naturally, David. But my thought is that responsibility may rule your inclination."

"Responsibility to Uncle Henry—all the servants of this House?"

"In a measure, yes. Chiefly to yourself. David."

"Myself!" David's laugh was bitter. "The responsibility to myself of not being defeated by duties and problems beyond my powers or

abilities, and alien and apart from my thoughts or inclinations! I don't think you've grasped—Uncle Henry could not grasp or dream—how the years at the Stores—the hopeless misery with Allen—and all of them—have made me hate the Stores—the hopelessness, I say—then. And the hopelessness still!”

“David, you are head of Cleeve & Cleeve, not an inexperienced boy in its counting-house—with Allen in charge of you!”

“No! But I'm as fitted to be Cleeve & Cleeve now as I was to be the humble clerk—five years ago. And as happy!”

“You are melancholy, naturally, from Cleeve's death, and you are diffident!”

“That isn't all, sir.” David did not raise his eyes. “There's the thought—the certainty—that Uncle Henry left all to me in the belief—the mistaken belief—that I was—as I am not!”

Learoyd's look was troubled and intent. “You mean that he believed that you, being a Cleeve, must care, as he cared, for the Cleeve Stores—you must share his hopes and ambitions for the Stores—and for yourself?”

David checked himself in reply—in outburst—in the longing to confide in Learoyd. His laughter was hollow. “I mean no more than I say, sir. Only this! I'm not as Uncle Henry thought me. This—all this!—is only a prison house to me! I'm wearying you—troubling you. Shall we walk or drive to Mr. Lade's?”

"Thank you, I prefer to walk on a morning like this. David, you meant no more than you have told me?"

"Nothing more, sir!"

"What are your plans, David?"

"For Cleeve & Cleeve? I hope only for your guidance, sir."

"I'm not speaking of the Stores, David. I mean your home—your loneliness—Miss Serena is not congenial to you, in spite of her affection for you."

"You are asking my plans for my Mother, sir—aren't you?"

"Yes, David!"

"I have written to her," David said, meeting Learoyd's gaze. "I have asked her to return to me. You disapprove?"

Learoyd took his cigar from his lips. "No, I don't disapprove, David!"

"Do you approve?"

"Isn't that implied?"

"You don't think as the Cleeves think," David sneered. "You're not afraid of her."

"How—afraid, David?"

"The social hurt to them—or me?"

Learoyd rose. "We'll go to Lade now, David, please!"

"You haven't replied!"

Learoyd took up his hat and cane. "David, you don't wish me seriously to discuss Mrs. Cleeve? Will you promise me one thing?"

"What?"

"Work till she returns to you. Work as you've worked this morning."

"Why?"

"I think that Mrs. Cleeve and you will determine the future more wisely than you and I, David."

CHAPTER XXXIV

ISABEL, DAVID

DEAR, I can't think clearly yet. I can't believe it's real. You're sure it isn't only a dream, David?"

He laughed: "I'm quite sure, Mother!"

"Not a dream, David!"

"A dream fulfilled, Mother!"

Her hand trembled lightly on his hand. "Oh, my dear, fulfilment doesn't always mean——"

"Doesn't always mean what, Mother?"

"The happiness we dream!"

"Is that flattering to me, Mother?"

She laughed softly and tremulously: "No! It isn't tactful of me—is it? But it's such a relief not to have to be tactful! . . . Dear, you won't believe—though it's true, that I was always tactful as a governess—and so well bred! So stiff—so learned—so unattractive, and so unreal, David! But then, I had to earn my bread—doesn't that sound like a sentence from a spelling-book? Earning one's bread! A governess earns little else, dear!"

She was driving beside him in the Cleeve carriage from the waterside to the Cleeve house in Macquarie Street. He had abandoned to

Learoyd the management of the affairs of Cleeve & Cleeve that day. From early morning he had awaited the *Swan* from Sydney. She had written that she would return by that ship—she must give due notice of her resignation of her post as governess.

And late on the yellow April afternoon, going home! And in the joy of her return, and of her beauty, and her elegance of dress, and of her gay, excited chatter, stilling doubts and fears.

“David, it was good of you, but it was foolish, to send me so much money through your lawyers!”

“The money was mine, Mother!”

“Cleeve money, David,” she said, looking sadly at him.

“A debt due to you from Cleeve & Cleeve!”

She laughed: “Do you think so, David?”

“The only debt long overdue from Cleeve & Cleeve!”

“Oh, I’m so glad you think that it was in payment of a debt! Though I don’t know—I’m not sure . . . only I know I felt that I shouldn’t take Cleeve money—couldn’t bear to take it—I must send it back to you! . . . But, David, do you like my dress?”

“Yes, black is becoming to you, with that violet colour.”

“I think so, too. And my bonnet and my mantle, and my gloves! . . . David, I couldn’t bear not to buy them—even with the money

you sent me. You don't know what it is to be poor for so many years, and to long for beautiful clothes, and not be able to buy them! . . . So I gave up doubting whether I ought to take and spend the money. I spent it in Sydney. I bought everything I needed. Like this veil, David?"

"That veil! Why do you hide your face like this?"

Her elation left her suddenly. She turned her veiled face from him. "This is Hobart Town, David!"

With look and tone of arrogance he retorted: "And I am Cleeve & Cleeve, Mother!"

She whispered: "Dear, that can't make any difference to me!"

"Can it not? My Mother is my Mother. I shall exact respect!"

She said with a sad little laugh: "No, David! Even you—even Cleeve & Cleeve! . . . You're so dear and gallant, but you're only a boy!"

"Twenty-one in May."

"Oh, of course! But that isn't my meaning, David. You're only a boy in knowledge of life—and it's cruelty—to anyone like me."

"Mother, please!"

"Yes, dear, I know I'm distressing you. I shouldn't be talking to you about the future."

"Your future is with me!"

"Is it, David?"

"I have told you!"

"But is it?—I wonder!"

"If you will stay with me!" he muttered, eyeing her uneasily. "You're not suggesting—you're not dreaming of going away from me again?"

She did not look at him. Her voice was slow and soft and sad: "David, I can't answer—yet. I only know I shouldn't have come back to you, even though you begged me so much, and I love you so much, I couldn't bear not to come back to you! If I'd done my duty—if my love hadn't been stronger than myself—or any thought of right or wrong toward you, I'd not have entered your life. I wouldn't have done you that hurt!"

"Oh, that's folly!"

"No. It isn't folly, David. It's the truth. You don't realize how it will hurt you, David. All the folk of your life and class, David, the free folk, who remember, David——!"

"What are Hobart Town and its society to me?" he said contemptuously. "I have no part or patience with the narrowness and the arrogance of them or their pretentious piety!"

"David," she said, "society here made its rule for its own protection—that is why. So that it might be safe from all the dreadful life here through the prisons, David. That's why it seems so narrow to you."

"And to you!"

"Perhaps. But I don't pretend that it means nothing to me, David. You see I was

accustomed—but that can't matter now. It's too late, David."

"How—too late?"

She faltered: "David, you can't ever restore me to my place. You can't give me back the life among them all. I cared for the life among them. You can't make them take me back!"

"If it were so it would count nothing to me!"

"But to me, dear! It counts to me! . . . And I haven't deserved it, David—believe that I haven't deserved to be treated so. I wouldn't have come back to you—I wouldn't have dared to heed you, asking me—if I'd deserved it—if I'd done you any harm—any real harm—before!"

CHAPTER XXXV

GOLD AND PEARL

HE had ordered that the house should be decked with flowers in honour of his Mother's return. He had made choice of special dishes, fruit and wine for her first dinner with him. He had satisfied himself that nothing was lacking to the comfort of her room. He had spent extravagantly on the redecoration and refurnishing of the great guest-room for her—he had rejected the thought of any of the Cleeve rooms.

He had chosen as his gifts to her, ear-rings with long drops of gold, a necklace of thin gold with a dark pearl as a pendant, and a Cashmere shawl. He had placed his gifts before the dressing-glass in her room, so that she might find them while preparing for dinner.

She descended radiant to him, awaiting her in formal black and white linen, at the foot of the stairs. He delighted that she had chosen not to wear mourning—that convention for Henry Cleeve must have seemed hypocritical of her. Acres carried candles to light her down the stair.

She seemed to David white and rose and gold in her silken gown, the ear-rings and the

necklace, with the shawl floating about her shoulders. Her eyes were bright, and her lips and cheeks were touched with rose—David did not suspect art. He thrilled to her beauty, her laughing voice, and her words:

"David, I know you mean the necklace and the ear-rings and the shawl as gifts for me, and they are exquisite, and I wear them all for you, dear, and I don't know how much to thank you!"

"But you have thanked me, Mother!"

"Have I? No, dear, I'm only beginning to thank you."

"You've thanked me by wearing them for me."

He offered her his arm; her fingers trembled on his sleeve; he heard her stifle a sob. He said hastily, laughing: "And you've shown that they please you!"

"Oh, they do."

"By coming down late for dinner!"

"Am I late? Dear, I always was late, I remember—and——"

"Don't remember, Mother! Shall we go to dinner at once?"

"Why, of course, David! The cook disapproves of me already, I'm sure, and sighs for—where is Serena Cleeve. You haven't told me. Only that she isn't here."

"She is with Mrs. Learoyd."

"Is she? . . . Oh, I see! . . . I must have been imagining, of course——"

"Imagining what?"

"Nothing, David, dear! . . . Only a fancy of mine. As though she were watching me—disapproving, of course. Hating me, David!" Her voice sank to a whisper.

"Do you mean you imagined she was in the house still?"

"Of course not, David—now you've told me. . . . It's like old Mr. Cleeve's portrait there!" and she motioned to the painting over the chimney-piece, as they entered the dining-room. "Disapproving—you see. He always disapproved of me. Henry's portrait—where is that, David?"

"In his room. I had it taken down from the hall!"

"Why, David?"

He checked his glance of swift suspicion. "I did not like the portrait—that was all."

"David, the roses. Oh, the golden roses! . . . Why, you've known all the colours I care for—everything I've wanted!"

"Have I, Mother?"

"How is it that you know me so well, David?" she murmured, looking at him with adoration.

"Perhaps through dreaming of you, Mother," he said, laughing.

"David, I wish that you hadn't awakened from your dreaming of me!"

CHAPTER XXXVI

ISABEL, DAVID, SERENA

SHE insisted that he should not go with her at once from the dining-room to the parlour, when she rose from table. She would be very angry with herself, she said; she would think herself too exacting, or him polite to her only as a guest in his house. He must drink his wine and smoke his cigar in comfort.

She paused in the doorway to kiss him. She whispered: "You are very dear, David; kinder than any Cleeve!" and she passed on, with a rustle and flutter of silks—white and gold—through the gloom and state of the hall.

He returned to his wine. He drank freely, having the thought to acclaim her beauty and her dearness to him, and, all the while, picturing her—exquisite, in contrast with this dreary splendour, and repelling doubts and fears encroaching on his happiness, like the shadows of the room about him on the radius of the white light.

He did not linger over his wine. He hastened to seek his Mother in the parlour. As he left the dining-room he took instant heed of the dark figure passing swiftly through the hall—the curtains plucked apart, the parlour

door opened sharply, his Mother's exclamation and the shrill voice of Serena Cleeve.

He rushed across the hall, entered the room and, white with passion, he confronted Serena. He demanded thickly: "What does this mean? How dare you come into my house—unbidden?"

Serena stood by the hearth. Her left hand gripped the chimney-piece as though to steady herself. Her black mantle swayed and fluttered about her from her emotion. She had raised her veil—her look was livid, and her eyes burned with the passion matching his own. His Mother had been seated at the piano; her hands rested still on the keys, and her face was turned toward Serena. The colour on her cheeks was cruelly betrayed by her paleness. Her painted lips were faintly smiling.

Serena, gasping, seemed to struggle for speech.

He cried out, harshly: "What do you want here—stealing like this into my house?"

Serena found her voice: "To see this woman—once! To speak to her—once! To denounce her as——"

He cried out furiously: "Will you be silent?"

"No! I'll not be silent!"

"Go from my house!"

"When I have said what I have come to say!"

"Mother, please come away! . . . Don't stay here! . . . Don't listen to her!"

Isabel rose; instantly he interposed between the two; he offered his arm, and would have led her to the door. He was conscious of her air of pride and courage, and the scorn of her lips, and the firmness of her hand upon his arm.

Serena had passed by them to the door, and turned and faced them; and, rigid now, and colourless of look, and hard and rasping of voice, was crying out: "She'll not go till she's heard me! You'll not go, David! She's dared to come to this house—my brother's house—you've dared to bring her——!"

"To my house! Stand aside!"

"Your house—then! Your house! Yours, like everything that was Henry's! In payment for her! In recompense to you . . . her son . . . her lover's son! Henry's son!"

"That's a lie! Out of my house!"

"Show her the words in the diary—let her answer them!"

An instant Isabel Cleeve had swayed, as though about to swoon. She seemed to control herself; her fingers clutched at David's arm. He thrust past Serena Cleeve, and led his Mother from the room.

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE DEFENCE OF ISABEL CLEEVE

“**D**AVID . . . I know that writing, so—he couldn’t have meant . . . he couldn’t have imagined . . . unless his mind . . . was sick; and sometimes when people are ill, as he was, their minds imagine . . . shameful things . . . cruel things! . . . Are you sure . . . of the words, David?”

She sat by the table in the study, her head bowed, and her hands clasped at her knees. The shawl had slipped from her white shoulders, and trailed on the floor. The long, golden drops of her ear-rings, and the pearl and gold on her bosom, were tremulous with her emotion. He stood at the hearth, ashen of look. The cold eyes of the portrait of Charles Cleeve seemed pitilessly intent on her, and the thin lips sneering at her.

David muttered: “Yes, I am sure—yes!”

“How, David? You’ve burnt the book. You must have been distressed, cruelly distressed! How can you be sure?”

“The words couldn’t be blotted from my mind. They seem burnt—branded—on my mind . . . and my heart!”

“And yet it’s not true, David!”

Her voice died; she sat drooping and silent, and staring before her. He looked at her dully, stepped forward, and stretched out his hands, as though to touch her hands. His lips moved as if to utter words of pity for her, and forgiveness. She did not stir still. He drew back. He covered his eyes with his right hand, and leaned against the marble chimney-piece—rigid and silent.

She uttered a little sigh. She whispered: "You don't believe me, David! I can't make you believe. I don't know how to make you believe, except by telling you, David, what really happened long ago. . . . You've never questioned me. You've forbore to question me. Was that through fear, David? Or was it for love of me? . . . Not love; it couldn't have been love—only fear. . . . The fear of awaking from your dream of me!"

She paused, and for a while sat motionless, and with a frozen look of despair.

The ticking of the clock sounded monotonously and clearly through the room. A moth fluttered against the shining of the candlelight, on the high, white wall.

Her gaze seemed to concentrate on the portrait of Charles Cleeve. She laughed suddenly; and at the note of mockery and despair, David's hand sank from his brow, and his look at her was white and stricken.

"David, even Charles wouldn't have believed that against Henry! Even Charles! . . .

Faraday—yes; it was Faraday to him, listening . . . spying that night; not Henry. It couldn't have been Henry—to him; it couldn't have been Henry protesting—vowing and beseeching. No Cleeve could have imagined—Henry! But it was he, not Faraday, who escaped—unseen—that night, when Charles forced his way into the room, having listened . . . listened . . . spied!”

“Mother, for God's sake!”

The clasp of her hands parted, and with a gesture of passion and despair, she started from her chair. He saw her sway, and seem about to fall. Instantly he caught her in his arms. She seemed to struggle with him, and repel him, but at once to weaken. Her head bowed; she covered her eyes with her hands; her sobbing was torment to him.

“Mother . . . Mother!”

“David, don't hold me—let me go!”

“No!”

“I shouldn't have come here—I shouldn't have dared! . . . I'll go to-night, David, out of your life—I'll not trouble you again—so cruelly trouble you!”

“You'll not go! I'll not give you up! I'll not believe——!”

“You do believe!”

“I say I'll not believe! . . . Henry Cleeve lied—writing so—in his arrogance—writing so! In his cowardice—as long ago, in his cowardice—he let you suffer!”

Her hands sank from her eyes, touched his shoulders, and twined about his neck.

"David, if you—if my son—could believe!"

"I believe!"

"If my son could believe—all the world might think me guilty, but I should hold my head high and proudly—I should dare——"

"Your head is bowed towards me, Mother!"

"Only in worship, David!"

"And your eyes are dim with tears, and your voice is faint with fear! . . . Why? . . . Have not the Cleeves done hurt enough to you and me."

She kissed his mouth. She drew from his arms. Her hands sank by her side. She moved a little from him, so that the light was clear upon her face, and its composure now replacing grief and terror.

He had a thought of her high pride of look, and the clearness of her gaze at him, and in her voice, slow and controlled, the confidence of truth:

"David, to you, whom most on earth I love, I say that I have spoken the truth, the whole truth—nothing but the truth! My lips have set a kiss upon your lips as on a Testament, precious and sacred to me! . . . I am not guilty in the sight of God, to Whom I offer humble and reverent petition, that if no other man believe, you, my son, may believe; this shall be recompense to me—that you believe! . . . Your love shall be my Paradise; and all

my griefs shall be assuaged, and all my tears be dried, and all my plaint be stilled! . . . For I did no wrong against my husband. I did no wrong against you, David! . . . I took no lover. I knew no other loyalty and allegiance than to my husband. I have known no other love since you were given to me—no other love than for my son! . . .

“David, if you believe me, I fear no eyes of scorn—no word of shame or scandal. I shall walk proudly before all, and I shall care to live, and I shall hope that, in God’s time, from your faith in me, and your love of me, all others may believe me innocent—even as you believe! . . .”

“Even as I believe!”

CHAPTER XXXVIII

WAY OF ESCAPE

DAVID, contending with an obstinate stud, stood before the tall dressing-glass in his bedroom.

The prim clock, ticking diffidently on the chimney-shelf, pointed to the hour of one. The pearl shell figures gleamed fantastically against the blackness of the lacquer screen. The candles fluttered before the dressing-glass, and the curtains filled like sails, for the windows were open wide to the cold breeze. The glass reflected, palely, David's thin, sunburnt face, the elation of his eyes, the decision of his lips, and the tilt of his chin, which might have suggested the Cleeve arrogance but for his clearly seeking space for his conflict with the stud in his shirt, which delayed his undressing and going to bed.

He had made no change in the appointment of his room. Dull and colourless and indefinite, it reflected still the influence of Serena Cleeve. And in his occupation of the room—and the house—nothing would be changed—apart from the changes in the guest-room made for his Mother! . . . Uncle James and Aunt Susannah—and Anne—might make all the

changes they would, if they would consent to leave the Learoyd cottage at New Town for the Cleeve house, freeing him.

He had talked much, and he would talk finally, with Learoyd to-morrow on the Port Phillip plan. The diversion of two of the Cleeve schooners to the River Tamar—the passengers, the freight, and the sheep for Port Phillip—was proving more profitable already, as he had estimated to Learoyd, than the trading of the schooners between Hobart Town and Sydney. The movement across the Strait was increasing, and would increase. The Port Phillip Settlement was developing in vigorous life, in spite of Sydney and Government House—in spite of the Home Government and its opposition to a Settlement which was not a penal settlement, under the control of its officials. The aim of Gellibrand of a free Colony at Port Phillip would be attained, even though the Association were disappointed of its claim to the territory for which Batman had bartered.

Port Phillip! Wool. The needs of the Settlement. The trade of Cleeve & Cleeve. The flocks of the Port Phillip pastures—wool, through Cleeve & Cleeve for England.

David frowned at the thought of Henry Cleeve. Yet Cleeve had foreseen——

Learoyd had approved David's plan for an office of Cleeve & Cleeve in Launceston, for direction and conduct of the Port Phillip trade.

Not thinking, though, David had not thought, even then——

In Launceston, for the while, he would be out of reach of Hobart Town, happily his Mother need have less fear of slight or sneer from any enemy who remembered the scandal of long ago, not knowing the cruel wrong to her. . . . In Port Phillip, growing—how speedily, the Cleeve reports told, the village was growing—later, she need fear nothing. He and she might hope for serenity, happiness, honour. . . .

Learoyd was absorbed in the management of Cleeve & Cleeve. His interest in life, he said, had been re-established. He could control alone—free David—for Launceston—for Port Phillip, to build up new markets for Cleeve & Cleeve—new branches. To fashion his own life, not allow Henry Cleeve still to dominate him. To take from Henry Cleeve not so much as he might give to Cleeve & Cleeve.

And to spare his Mother the tax on her courage and endurance in facing Hobart Town society. . . . Yet he would go to Lade next day—tell all—have him lay the truth before the Governor, seek the intervention of Government House on her behalf, and ensure the publication of the truth in justice to her.

But to be free of Hobart Town, and Cleeve & Cleeve, and this house! To have his Mother with him, in happiness and in honour! Dear

God, the cruelty of the wrong done to her—the falsehood of the Cleeves, but the splendour of her justification of herself, and the glory of the truth.

And the splendour and the promise of life—Port Phillip—his own essay for fortune, and as his inspirations, freedom, his Mother—Anne! . . .

THE END

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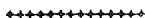
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